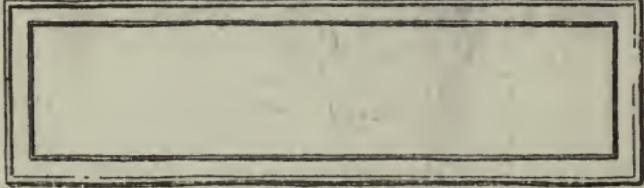
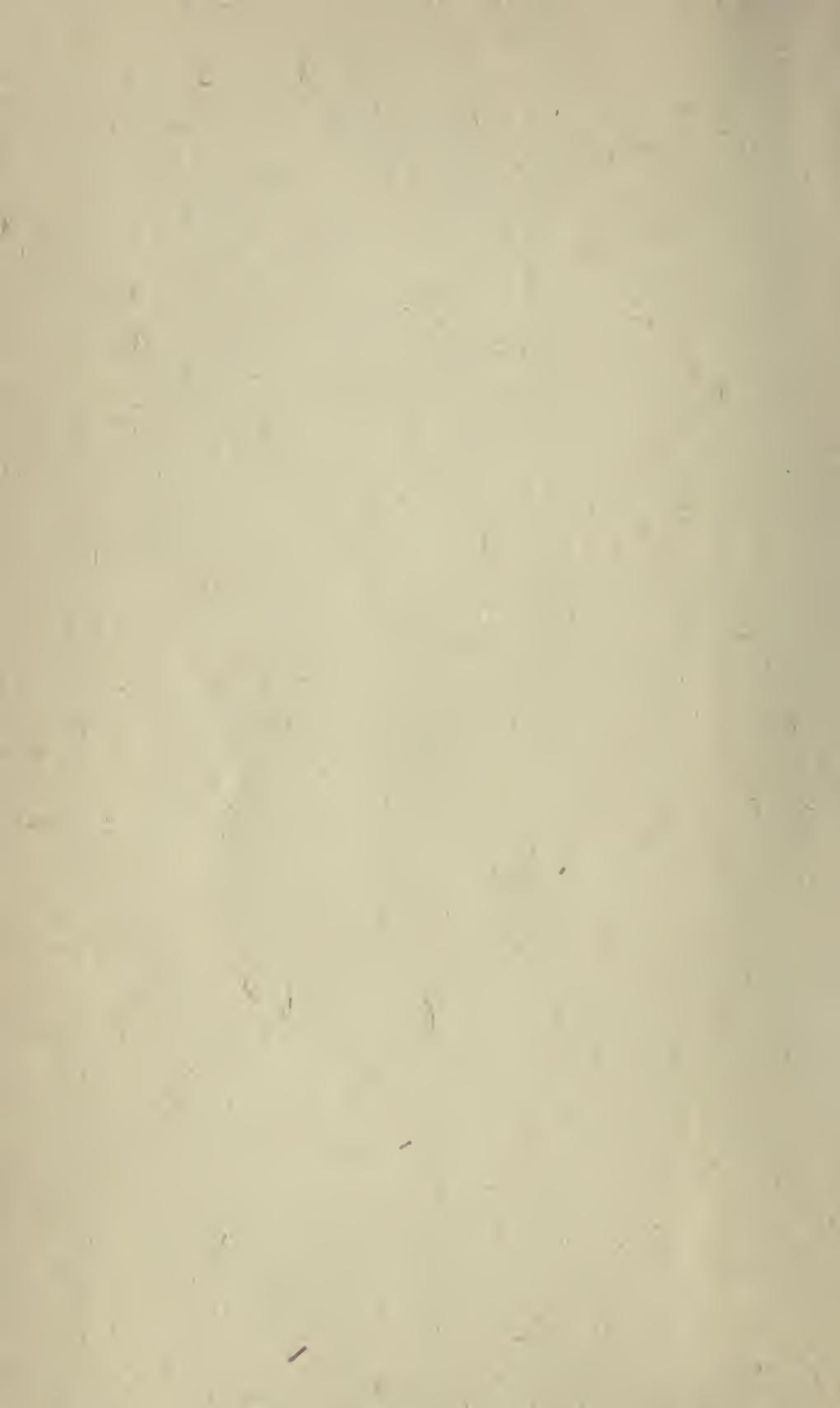


MAIN LIBRARY - AGRICULTURE DEPT.  
Education







# A COMMUNITY CHURCH



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

# A COMMUNITY CHURCH

THE STORY OF A MINISTER'S EXPERIENCE  
WHICH LED HIM FROM THE CHURCH  
MILITANT TO THE CHURCH  
DEMOCRATIC

BY

HENRY E. JACKSON

SPECIAL AGENT IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION  
UNITED STATES BUREAU OF EDUCATION



UNIV. OF



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
The Riverside Press Cambridge

1919

J 3

COPYRIGHT, 1919, BY HENRY E. JACKSON

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

MAIN LIBRARY AGRICULTURE DEPT.

S/la Agr. Educ.

TO MELL  
AGRICULTURE

DEDICATED  
TO ALL MEN AND WOMEN  
BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCHES  
WHO HAVE DISCOVERED THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION  
ACCORDING TO JESUS  
WHO ARE SINCERELY DEVOTED TO  
THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRACY  
AND WHO EARNESTLY DESIRE THE CHURCHES  
TO BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENTS  
IN ITS BEHALF

428679



*"He goes seeking liberty, which is so dear,  
As he knows who for her refuses life."*

DANTE'S MOTTO



## PREFACE

AT one of the forum meetings of a community center conducted in a public school building of Rochester, New York, there occurred a few years ago a dramatic incident which embodied a significant challenge to all thoughtful and patriotic citizens. During the progress of the address and the discussion which followed it, a young man sat in the rear of the auditorium, apparently indifferent to all that was going on and lost in his own thoughts. Near the close of the meeting he arose, as if aroused from a dream, with living fire in his eyes and his face illumined by a sudden inspiration. The following in substance is what he said:

“MR. CHAIRMAN, I do not know the subject under consideration, but I request the privilege of announcing a discovery I have made to-night concerning the community center movement of which this forum is a part.” His request was granted, and he continued: “I am a Russian immigrant and have been in this country for ten years. Before I left my native land, I inquired of my friends concerning the kind of national church existing in America. They all answered, ‘America has no national church.’”

## PREFACE

I said to myself, 'These people do not know the facts, for I have never heard of a nation without a national church.'

"On my journey to America I visited England. I asked the same question of many English friends, thinking that because they spoke the same language, they would be better informed about America than were my Russian friends. But they all made the same answer, 'America has no national church. The state has no connection with any church in America.' After I arrived in this country I found that my friends in Russia and England were correct in the information they had given me, but I was unsatisfied, for I felt that a country with ideals like yours ought to have some kind of a national church.

"During these ten years, therefore, I have been searching for *the American church*. Everywhere I went I saw many buildings and I kept asking, 'What is that?' 'A Presbyterian church,' they answered. 'What is that?' 'A Methodist church.' 'What is that?' 'A Roman church.' But nowhere did I find *an American church*. To-night I have discovered it. This is it and you never knew it. The real American national church is your Free Public School, built and maintained by all the people and destined to be used for the instruction of adults and youths as well as children, on all questions which concern

## PREFACE

their common welfare, their moral, social, and economic, as well as their intellectual, welfare."

James Bryce in his *American Commonwealth* shows that he was equally impressed with the uniqueness of the fact that an established church in the United States "glares by its absence"; but this Russian immigrant had discovered a movement which was just beginning when Mr. Bryce left America.

The purpose of this book is to attempt a careful examination of the discovery which our young Russian friend thinks he has made and with whom many of the devoted leaders of the community center movement heartily agree.

It is written for the large and rapidly increasing number of thoughtful people who have grown dissatisfied with our sectarian and provincial churches, most of which are importations from Europe, all of which are privately controlled institutions, working with selected groups of people, and none of which is in a position at present to appeal to the community as a whole.

The book contains the story of a common and typical experience, which reveals the reason why one minister declines to remain in the church as it is now organized; which exhibits the church's present problem together with a suggested solution for it; which portrays the

## PREFACE

process of evolution through which the church is passing; which demonstrates what it must do to itself to become a useful social institution; which shows how one minister solved for himself the problem, with which the war challenges the churches, and which indicates to the churches their way out into a new freedom, on the basis of which they may continue to be alive honorably.

For the fruitful discussion of disturbing questions like these, one thing and one alone is needful. It is open-mindedness. Its value is beyond calculation. Every great leader of the world's thought and action has insisted on its indispensable importance. Confucius expressed it in the golden phrase, "Mental hospitality." Socrates used a phrase out of which was coined the word "philosopher." He said, "I am not a wise man — I am a 'lover of wisdom,' a seeker after new ideas." Jesus called it the "spirit of truth." So highly did He regard it that He called it a holy spirit. In his judgment a closed mind is *the* unpardonable sin. The reason why these masterful leaders of men so prized the habit of being open-minded is because they understood that without mental hospitality no progress in any line is possible.

A Folk High School of Denmark includes in its curriculum a regular course of study under the picturesque title, "A Window in the West."

## PREFACE

Its purpose is to discover and transport new ideas from England and America, that Denmark may use them for its own improvement. To inaugurate such a course in every public school and in every church would mean new life and power for both institutions. The writer believes that the lack of an open mind is the chief cause of the failure of the church in the past, and that the acquirement of it is the chief need in any attempt to Christianize the church and equip it to seize the golden opportunity now confronting it.

If there be any not equipped with an open mind who chance upon this book, the author warns them of the risk they run in reading it, and he suggests that they do not venture beyond the preface. But inasmuch as the tragedy of this great and terrible war has revealed the lack of an open mind to be little short of criminal, the writer is encouraged to believe that there are few who are not awakened and ready to show mental hospitality to any suggestion which even promises possible aid in the task of reconstructing a better sort of world. This task is the present urgent challenge to all men and women of good will. To such this book is addressed in the hope that they will help to put a new window in every church.

The manuscript of the book was written almost three years ago. Its publication has been

## PREFACE

postponed because the writer felt that the public was not prepared to receive it. He now thinks it is. His reason for thinking so is a recent experience which reveals a significant change in public opinion. The writer was delivering a series of lectures on "The Community Center" at the Chautauqua Assembly. There he was consulted by a committee of ministers from the Presbytery of Buffalo.

Three of their churches, they said, had already left the Presbytery and had become independent community churches. The Presbytery had raised ten thousand dollars for the purpose of establishing a Presbyterian church in a new section of the city, but the people were unwilling to have it so and demanded that it be made a community church. The committee wanted to know what, in these circumstances, the Presbytery ought to do and how it could adjust itself to the community movement.

The writer answered their questions by describing the constructive plan stated in this book. He was asked to return to Chautauqua and state it in a public lecture. He confesses that he approached the lecture with much concern lest the people would resent it. To his surprise and delight they not only approved and applauded it, but demanded a second hour for the purpose of asking questions. During this hour the people evidenced not only their deep

## PREFACE

interest, but also their profound conviction that the churches faced the urgent necessity to reconstruct themselves.

The writer was asked to repeat the lecture before the Presbytery of Buffalo. To his surprise again the position he took received a unanimous vote of approval. It is highly gratifying to discover that the reform which this book was written to stimulate has already begun to happen. It has begun, where all reforms must begin, in a changed state of mind and a new social consciousness.

In a new section of the city of Buffalo, New York, there has been organized a community church which in several fundamental respects approaches the type suggested in this book. It does not use the term "community" as camouflage, but is an honest community church. It was organized by a group of thoughtful and progressive laymen without consultation with ministers or presbyteries. This is what the people would do frequently, if they were untrammelled by ecclesiastical machinery. On the other hand, a New York church is now reconstructing itself into a community type of institution under the leadership of its progressive and unecclesiastical minister. It is highly significant that the Buffalo church, in its search for a minister, took particular pains to find a man who had left a sectarian church for the

## PREFACE

same reasons which induced the writer to leave his. How refreshing! A rejected stone has become a corner-stone. Rebellion against tyrannies in the church is beginning to be recognized as obedience to God.

The coöperating cause of this rapid reversal of public opinion is the War. It has made three facts about the church disturbingly clear: First, the exceeding great need of the world for the contribution which the Christian religion is designed to make to it; second, the exceeding great failure of the churches to supply what the world most needs; third, that if it hopes to make a contribution of real value, the church must be organized democratically. The first two propositions are assumed to be self-evident facts; and the writer addresses himself to the third as the next step in the emancipation of the Christian religion from the fetters which hitherto have caused its failure.

The divine-right delusion as applied to the state has almost been destroyed. It must likewise be banished from the church. Time was when the king business was most useful. There is a reason why the people cried, "Long live the king," for it was he who led Europe out of feudal anarchy into the consolidated modern state. Likewise an autocratic church, as the lesser of two evils, once rendered a real service to civilization in Europe. But the divine-right idea in

## PREFACE

both church and state was used as a bulwark for special privilege and paved the way for its own destruction. God is tired of autocracy in either church or state, and so are the people. They are now sufficiently intelligent to get along very well without deluding themselves with a fiction, from which they have suffered untold damage. The church, which ought to have led the way to freedom, will now be compelled to follow the example of the state and organize itself democratically.

For these reasons the writer is convinced that the time has come when the publication of his story will be most productive of good. It will not now fall on unprepared soil.

The author speaks in no wise for the Bureau of Education, but only for himself, and he takes sole and full responsibility for all opinions expressed in it. Theoretically the United States Bureau of Education can make no connection with a sectarian church, although during the War, and after, several departments of the government made direct appeals to the churches for their service. Nevertheless, in the course of my work as the Bureau's representative of the community center movement, I am frequently asked by the churches what they can do to help the movement. These questions deserve an honest answer. This book, therefore, may be regarded as my answer to these questions. But it

## PREFACE

is much more. It is my contribution, as an individual, to a cause in which I am deeply interested, the cause of organizing social activities in behalf of the common welfare. The churches are social institutions capable of becoming either very helpful or very harmful to the nation. To assume toward them an attitude of moral neutrality is an impossibility. Nor is it desirable when, as at present, they express the desire to serve the common good and ask to be shown how they can do it. This is the day of golden opportunity for the cause of democracy. The new day upon which we have entered has set before the churches an open door which no man can shut. The time to go through an open door is when the door is open.

*Washington, D.C.  
Oct. 1, 1919.*

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	xxi
I. CAN A MINISTER BE AN HONEST MAN?	1
II. THE CHURCH AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM	47
III. THE CHURCH AND FINANCIAL FREEDOM	91
IV. THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM	125
V. THE CHURCH OF To-MORROW: A COMMUNITY CHURCH	157
VI. THE COMMUNITY CHURCH: AN AMERICAN PRODUCT	195
VII. THE AMERICAN CHURCH: A COMMUNITY CENTER	233
VIII. A COMMUNITY CENTER AND A COMMUNITY CHURCH	267
IX. THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY	315
APPENDICES:	
A. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CHURCH?	355
B. HOW TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY CHURCHES	362
C. HOW TO ORGANIZE A COMMUNITY CHURCH	370
1. Certificate of Incorporation	370
2. The Constitution	372
3. The By-laws	375
AFTERWORD	379
LIST OF REFERENCES	380
INDEX	385



## INTRODUCTION

THIS book is primarily the autobiography of an idea. Incidentally it contains the story of the author's personal experience in a particular church and a statement of the conclusions which his experience illustrates and enforces. The name of the church is suppressed to save it needless embarrassment, because the author loves it. Many facts of the story also are suppressed, and only those experiences narrated which he believes to be typical of a general condition in the churches, because only such experiences have practical value for others.

It is with great reluctance that I narrate my own experience, but to be of real value the story must be frankly personal. Truth embodied in the concrete form of a story is far more effective than the same truth stated in the abstract form of general propositions. In all questions of metaphysics it is a safe guiding principle that "egotism is the truest modesty." Although I diligently sought it, I could find no reason which my conscience would accept to justify me in escaping the performance of a difficult but obvious duty. Whenever a man discovers an important truth, or thinks he has, he be-

## INTRODUCTION

comes a traitor to that truth unless he is willing to pass it on to others.

One cannot avoid the conviction that the permanent welfare of the church at large is more important than the temporary comfort of a few individuals. A small group in the church of which I speak will doubtless be disturbed by my book. But knowing as I do that the large majority of its members heartily agree with the ideals here expressed, I feel assured that they will rejoice that our mutual experience may be used to render service to other churches in effecting needed reforms. This hope at least will be some compensation to them, and to me, for the burden we bore together, and may go far in turning our mutual sorrow into joy.

I have consented with myself to be frankly personal in my story, not only to furnish help to other churches, but also to inspire other ministers. I have found the way out. I have discovered an ample and satisfying solution for my personal problem. This fact may be a comfort to the large number of ministers who are seriously puzzled and often permanently crippled by the same kind of an experience, whose usual end is chiefly sorrow. My story may open for them a door of opportunity into a larger service for the Kingdom of God, from which the church has shut them out, and for

## INTRODUCTION

which their painful experience has been an indispensable preparation and a blessing in disguise.

If the experience here narrated seems incredible to any who have not had a like one, I would say to them that I have purposely understated rather than overstated it. It is my conviction that it is not at all uncommon. The frequent confessions, made to me in all parts of the country, have abundantly confirmed this conviction. I have heard directly from the lips of many ministers substantially the same story as that narrated by Harold Bell Wright in his novel, "The Calling of Dean Matthews." An awakened conscience among ministers is sure to make it increasingly frequent in the near future. The common tendency to put loyalty to the church above loyalty to the truth, and the average minister's lack of financial independence, cause these facts usually to be concealed, but they exist. Even when the facts are compromised and covered up before they reach the stage of crisis, their frequency reveals a general condition among churches to-day which is blighting their moral and spiritual life and destroying their usefulness. This fact is a matter of such common knowledge that it only needs to be stated to be generally accepted as true.

My own experience has been in all essential

## INTRODUCTION

respects, and in a deeper sense, the same as that embodied in Winston Churchill's novel "The Inside of the Cup," a book which I denied myself the pleasure of reading until after my own experience had been completed, my own conclusions from it drawn, and my course of action determined. After making due allowance for certain dramatic combinations and exaggerations in Mr. Churchill's book, which he obviously uses for well-known artistic purposes in order to make his facts impressive, my own experience, and a fairly wide observation during twenty years, have convinced me that as a whole it is a correct report of the facts as they are. At least I for one found it to be so. Mr. Churchill's book is a challenge to the church to correct the evils which he vividly describes. As a public teacher of the church, I accepted the challenge, brought to me not by the book, but by the facts themselves at first hand. The following pages describe what happens, when such a challenge is accepted. The result is well worth study.

Mr. Churchill's book is a diagnosis of the disease from which churches are suffering, but he offers no constructive suggestion as to the remedy for it. Diagnosis, we all agree, is highly important and indeed indispensable. All true friends of the church are under obligation to Mr. Churchill. Neither he nor any one else,

## INTRODUCTION

however, believes in diagnosis for the sake of diagnosis, any more than he believes in "amputation for amputation's sake." Its only use is to reveal the disease and to point the way to a remedy. We must begin with diagnosis, but we ought never to end with it. If we do, the work of diagnosis is labor lost. It has been my life-long habit never to criticize an existing order of things unless I had, or believed I had, something better to suggest. The only effective way to get rid of an evil is to put something better in its place. Only he can reform who can replace. I have consented with myself to reveal certain unpleasant facts only for the sake of pointing the way out of the difficulty. It is quite possible to make a positive use of negative facts.

After I had finished my book, I read also Herbert Quick's "The Broken Lance," which in my judgment is a far stronger book than Mr. Churchill's, and richly deserves to be better known than it is. It more nearly represents my own experience; that is, it shows the questions at issue to be far more fundamental than Mr. Churchill represents them to be. The questions which disturbed the hero of Mr. Churchill's book, while serious enough, are more superficial than those which disturbed Mr. Quick's hero. It is possible that the difficulties raised in Mr. Churchill's book could be patched up with

## INTRODUCTION

an average church of to-day; those raised in Mr. Quick's book cannot. It has confirmed in me the conviction that the conflict between Christianity according to Jesus and the Christianity of to-day, is an irrepressible conflict. Mr. Quick is true to the logic of the Christian position.] The life of his hero is logical as the life of Jesus is. His story is pathetic and soul-disturbing like the story of Jesus, touching emotional depths deeper than tears.

My question is, What are such men as those described by Mr. Quick and Mr. Churchill, to do when the church expels them, as it expelled Jesus? Of course, they can always do what Jesus did, work as individuals for the Kingdom of God among the people in the highways and open fields. But is there no institution through which they can work for democracy in order to gain the advantage which comes through organized coöperation? It may be true that a man who stands for the principles of Jesus will still be martyred as He was. I am sure he will be, if he stays in the church, or unless and until the church becomes Christian. But I am an "inveterate optimist," and I believe that the religion of democracy has to such a degree ceased to be an alien to our world, and has produced a sufficient number of people who are open-minded and sweet-spirited, as to make such an institution now possible. It may or may not be,

## INTRODUCTION

but I cannot bring myself to believe that the monotonous story of intolerance and persecution is to have no ending. At any rate, my present comfort comes from doing all I can to stop its repetition. To describe this new type of institution, through which to operate the religion of democracy, is the aim of my book.

The book attempts to make an honest answer to some of the questions which are being asked to-day with increased frequency by sincere people both inside and outside the churches: such questions as these: Why is it that the large majority of citizens of the United States are not connected with any church organization? Why are young men in alarming numbers, and young men of the best type, refusing to enter the Christian ministry of the church? Why do so many large groups of people even hate the church? How can the church's declining influence for good be restored and increased? Does it need radical reforms? If so, what are they? What is the next step in the development of the church, which her internal defects and the manifest needs of human life indicate that she ought to take? Is the Free Public School used as a community center our American church? Do we need any other? If so, what type of church ought it to be? If we need both, how can they coöperate in the process of making good citizens for the

## INTRODUCTION

Republic, which obviously is one of the chief, if not the chief, aim of both institutions?

The author, of course, does not admit even to himself that he can hope to have made a full and final answer to questions as profound and far-reaching as these questions are. But he has made a discovery for himself which he believes will furnish a satisfactory answer to them. Said the wise Goethe, "We are not born to solve the problem of the world, but to find out where the problem begins and then to keep within the limits of what we can grasp." The author believes that all the above questions begin and center in the problem of democracy. He also believes that the schoolhouse used as the community capitol is the key to a solution of the problem and a clue to a correct answer to our questions. The answer he here makes has been patiently formulated during a thoughtful experience of twenty years, and clarified by an illuminating sorrow. As testimony based upon actual facts, therefore, it is admissible evidence in the trial of the case and ought to have a significant value for those who sincerely seek a solution of the complex and difficult problem, which churches at present are facing.

However much or little value the answer may have, it is at least an honest and constructive contribution from one man's experience. My own hope is that the united contributions from

## INTRODUCTION

the increasing number of men who to-day are having similar experiences, will serve to demonstrate in the not distant future that the manifest tendency of to-day toward the community use of the schoolhouse points the way to the most effective method of procedure, on which all sincere friends of progress can agree to act, and by means of which they can mobilize their forces in behalf of the common welfare. Believing that it is never enough to know what ought to be done, but that it is vitally important to know how to do it, the writer can only say that the correctness of the answer he has made to the church's problem seems to him to be so clearly confirmed both by the manifest failures of the past and the obvious needs of the future, that he is willing to venture to live his own life upon it and to test it in operation.

Guided by my fixed habit of never making a destructive criticism without also making a constructive suggestion, I have refrained from using for my book a negative or sensational title, and have chosen one which not only suggests a remedy, but states a present and significant fact. The movement from the church to the schoolhouse is now under way. This title is used not only because it states the evolution of my own progress up from the church militant to the church democratic, but in order to emphasize the fact that my experience is typical

## INTRODUCTION

of a general movement to-day away from sectarian churches toward the type of organization embodied in the schoolhouse community center. It is used also to suggest the necessity of devising a working agreement between the community center and a community church, so that they may coöperate as allies rather than compete as rivals. There is here no slightest suggestion of any union of church and state, which usually has never meant anything more than a partnership between two pieces of machinery, ecclesiastical and governmental, and almost invariably a calamity to both. The suggestion here is rather a union of religion and the nation, a union already in operation to an encouraging degree and certain to be so increasingly as citizens discover that at the heart of every political problem is the question of religion as well as that of economics. The book's title contains the same challenge which this fact makes to all thoughtful friends of the common good.

My book begins where "The Broken Lance" and "The Inside of the Cup" end. It attempts to make a contribution toward an answer to the questions which they raise. The question at issue is as old as the New Testament and as universal as human nature. My book is just a new chapter in an old story. To the church which suffers from this ancient evil, it offers a

## INTRODUCTION

remedy. To the church not yet afflicted with it, if there be any such churches, it offers a method of prevention. The student of history understands that fresh safeguards against this insidious danger have been a constantly recurring necessity. This necessity has become acute in our day. The only way in which a man, who is optimist enough to look at the facts in the church's life as they are, can hope to retain his optimism, is to do something to help change the facts. I am an optimist both by nature and by conviction. To know the facts as they are, but to believe, nevertheless, that there is always a best thing to be done — this I take it is true optimism. To do what is best to be done is wisdom. But to know the facts and to do nothing is intolerable. Hence this book. To write it has been a life-saving process for myself.

The discovery which the book describes has thrown open to me the gates of a new life, a new gladness, a renewal of the spirit of youth. Whether it will mean to others what it has meant to me depends upon the reader. Personally I have now passed beyond the need of it. When I finished the last page of the manuscript and looked back over it, I became conscious of the interesting fact that it would be impossible for me to write it now. I have left behind the experience which it narrates and entered into a new world of freedom. But to

## INTRODUCTION

those for whom this experience lies in the present or the future, my book, I trust, will be helpful in pointing the way out.

To those afflicted with the disease of old age in body or in mind, who have lost the capacity to accept new ideas, who cannot distinguish between the form and substance of truth, whose only comfort is found in existing forms, who are satisfied with things as they are and who prize peace above all else — to such my book has nothing to say. It would be a cause of deep regret if I thought I had needlessly disturbed their quiet, and I beg them to remember that it is not I but the truth which is disturbing. I have tried merely to report the facts as I found them to be.

But to all those who still retain the spirit of youth, who are disposed to extend mental hospitality to new ideas, who are optimistic enough to face facts, who find imperfect conditions an inspiration to high endeavor, who have courage enough to trust God without guarantees, and who have a sufficient sense of humor to perceive relative moral values — to all such my book has a meaning and a message. To them its message is a call to volunteer for service in the cause of fundamental democracy under the leadership of the bravest democrat of history, the Prophet of Nazareth, and to pay the price which such service entails.

## INTRODUCTION

Its message is like that expressed by Gareth, when his young heart was stirred with an ambition to do knightly service under King Arthur. His mother pleaded with him to remain at home in the castle, live a self-indulgent life and follow the deer. With no desire to be ungentle to his mother, but with the fine touch of scorn, which the temptation she offered him justly deserved, he answered:

"Man I am grown; a man's work must I do.  
Follow the deer? Follow the Christ, the King,  
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King,  
Else wherefore born?"

The purpose of my book is to help the youthful Gareths, not to hurt their aged mothers. To all young men and women whose hearts, like that of Gareth have been thrilled with the spirit of chivalric loyalty to the cause of democracy, my book aims to point out the way by which they may put their contagious ideals into effective operation. It sets before them an open door of opportunity.

HENRY E. JACKSON



# A COMMUNITY CHURCH

## I

CAN A MINISTER BE AN HONEST MAN?

*He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity and end by loving himself better than all.*

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

# A COMMUNITY CHURCH

## I

### CAN A MINISTER BE AN HONEST MAN?

IN his notes for a law lecture to young men, Lincoln once wrote, "If in your judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a lawyer." The popular belief concerning lawyers makes this advice seem pertinent with reference to them. But is it not wholesome advice with reference to any other man, particularly to the minister? For is he not a public teacher of the truth as he sees it? Is not a dishonest teacher of the truth an obvious contradiction in terms? To what extent ministers have confronted the difficulty of trying to be ministers and to be honest at the same time, I do not undertake to say. I only know that such a difficulty is now confronting me, and I suspect that, in this respect, I am typical of a large number.

I have been in the Christian ministry for twenty years and in no other line of work. I have had charge of two churches: a Presbyterian church located in one of the finest and most

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

intellectual suburbs of Philadelphia, and a Congregational church located in what is considered to be one of the finest and most beautiful suburbs of New York. Speaking in customary terms, I have had a success far above the average. Two handsome church buildings, for example, were built in each parish under my leadership. Judged by any standards at all, I have experienced exceptional happiness in my ministry. In the work of preaching I take great joy, which I may indicate by saying that I would rather preach than play tennis, which is my athletic hobby. I have always been fond of the personal side of my profession, for I am an enthusiastic lover of my fellow men. While I am still young, I have had sufficient experience and have acquired sufficient mental furnishing so that it can with truth be said that I have arrived at the point when I can begin to feel that I am able to preach with some degree of power.

Nevertheless, I am now leaving the Christian ministry; that is to say, the office of minister in a sectarian church. I am leaving it just at the time when, through study, experience, and spiritual insight, I am equipped to do far more effective work than at any previous time in my life. Whether or not I shall return to it is an open question. I left my New York suburban church because I could not remain in it and retain my moral and intellectual integrity.

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

Whether I can with honesty permit myself to accept another church is the question I am now debating with myself. In this debate I ask my readers to think their way with me through a question profoundly important to every friend of the Christian religion. One proposition, I take it, we are agreed on at the start—that if it should appear that it is impossible for a man to be a minister and to be honest also, one of two things must take place: either he must be honest never mind being a minister or else the church ought to be so reorganized as to permit him to be an honest one.

There are four things, said wise King Solomon, which are beyond my power to understand: “the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maiden.” Had Solomon lived after the time of the German Reformation, it is highly probable that he would have added at least one more to his list of practical puzzles, namely, “the way of a church with a minister.” While the church is to be classified as a puzzle and presents a problem which baffles one’s understanding, yet it is a puzzle which we find it impossible to let alone. The church belongs to the class of necessary evils. We cannot get along with it and we cannot get along without it. We may not hope to solve its problem, but we must look the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

puzzle squarely in the face, for we are compelled to acquire a working attitude toward it. To ignore it is a most decided attitude, acquired only after careful thought and sometimes a painful experience. That the church to-day is a problem not only to multitudes outside its walls, but also to itself, is a fact too obvious to need proof. It is my purpose to look the problem squarely in the face, with the hope of helping in a task very painful to multitudes of men, and a task common to all friends of the institution.

After I had gone to my New York suburban church, I learned that my predecessor had left it after an experience most humiliating both to himself and to the church itself. I also learned that it was the common belief of the community that this had been more or less true of all its ministers. As a matter of fact, every one of the seven ministers of the church, when he left it, also left the ministry. Some went into business and some into educational work. Two became college presidents. To what extent their experience with the church is responsible for their leaving the ministry, I do not myself, of course, undertake to say, because I do not know the facts at first hand. True, some of them had other reasons for leaving the church; but the common belief is that difficulties with the church were sufficient to cause all of them to abandon the ministry, quite apart from any other rea-

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

sons. I can well believe that this common opinion is correct, for it is a natural law that what occurs uniformly during a long period generally has a uniform cause. Of this uniform cause I once had a little glimpse. One of the two or three men most responsible for disturbing my own relation with the church, speaking of my most popular predecessor, took particular pains to tell me that, if he had not left when he did, there would have been an open outbreak in the church, as there had already been a private outbreak. I did not understand this at the time, but now I know it was a warning to me not to become as progressive as he was, under penalty of the same fate which threatened him.

The difficulty which my predecessors had encountered, while it disturbed me, did not greatly distress me. For I felt toward it as all young people feel toward death. They know it is a common experience, but they cannot conceive of it ever happening to them. Likewise I could not bring myself to think that this would ever happen to me. Why should it? I had entered the ministry as a young knight joined the crusades with high hope and courage; I was a born lover of my fellow men, and I gave myself to my work with unstinted enthusiasm and unremitting toil. I loved the members of my church; why should they not love me? I expected them to. True, the only church I had ever had before was one I had

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

started myself, and I never before was the pastor of an old church with inherited divisions and ancient animosities; therefore I had not become a conventional minister, who treats the pastorate as a game to be played, and I never shall.

Hence I little expected that the trouble which had so often occurred in the past history of the church would ever occur to me, but it did. Two years before I left the church, a preconcerted and systematic outburst of criticism broke over me totally unexpected and without warning. The form which this criticism took was so trivial and unworthy of Christian gentlemen that I do not care to describe it. I will save the church this humiliation. Of course, to every sincere lover of his fellow men, such an experience is tragically painful. But it did not confuse me, and after the first shock was over I became much interested in it. Some of the criticism was true, much of it false, and most of it foolish. This made me suspicious, for I knew that when men hide their real purpose and need to invent reasons for their actions, they naturally twist and falsify facts to such an extent as to be ridiculous. If these critics had wanted some real faults to criticize, I could have given them many which they never mentioned, and my wife could have given them many more than I could, only, of course, she would not have done so. Love

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

does not regard it as a duty to search out faults.

I never made any answer to the criticisms, either in public or private, for I was not willing to transact any church business on a moral plane so low and trivial. Besides, the criticisms were so ridiculous that I knew they would fall to the ground of their own weight. I confess that to suffer a gross and cruel injustice, but to remain silent under it and to return good for evil is a task most difficult to perform. But the task was laid upon me by considerations impossible to resist. The men who conducted the campaign of criticism had so crippled the church's moral influence in the community, and especially so injured the Christian ideals of the young people in the church,—an injury from which they never will recover fully,—that the necessity was laid on me to show the community a different standard of Christian conduct. I do not deserve any special credit for this, because, even apart from any high moral motives, I should have pursued the same course from ordinary motives of self-respect and common sense. I remembered that "all honor's wounds are self-inflicted"; that no man can be dishonored by another man who tries to injure him; that a man's honor can be tarnished only by his own conduct in the presence of such attempted injury. Even if I had desired merely to

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

get the best of my critics, I should have adopted the same methods, for, as Marcus Aurelius sagely remarks, "The best way to avenge thyself is not to become as the wrong-doer." I found great comfort in a modern equivalent of this sentiment by Edwin Markham, which he calls "Outwitted":

"He drew a circle that shut me out  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win,  
We drew a circle that took him in."

I quote this for the comfort of any of my fellow ministers who may be called to face a similar situation. A man does not need moral motives to show him that Christian conduct is wisest. At its lowest estimate, the method of love is the smart policy to pursue. But now a curious thing happened which greatly puzzled me. The method of love which I employed produced exactly the opposite effect to what I had expected. On honest men it always produces a good effect. But the more I returned good for evil, the more angry my critics became. This puzzled me until I found an explanation in the remark of Seneca, who said, "It is a law of human nature to hate those we have injured." Now I understood it. The anger of these men was a species of self-defense for a wrong they were committing. It was the rage of a guilty

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

conscience trying to deaden itself to a knowledge of the wrong it was supporting. They had to do one of two things, either abandon the wrong or stimulate their anger as a pretense of justification. Since they were determined not to abandon their course, they were compelled to cherish their anger. It was the only defense they had. I remembered also, what has frequently been exhibited in history, that a certain type of man becomes violently indignant in the presence of something he does not understand — a stand for conscience or the cause of freedom puzzles him and arouses his anger. But why should they not abandon their course which the whole community was condemning? The reason will appear presently — and the process of discovering it is highly interesting. At this point I had discovered a curious psychological fact of human nature, which illuminated the difficulty and determined my course of action.

I saw clearly, of course, that what my critics wanted was my resignation, but I had not the slightest intention of resigning, for the people were up in arms over the criticism and I felt sure I knew the reason for it. I understand perfectly well that a church has a right to ask its minister to resign, if it wishes to do so. A church may naturally come to feel a need for the inspiration of a new voice, as a minister often does for a new church. My wife and I are extremely sensitive

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

on this point. When we started in the ministry, we adopted the principle that we should leave any church just as soon as it made an intimation to this effect. Whenever such a time arrives in a church, there are many decent and courteous ways in which Christian gentlemen can arrange for a change to the satisfaction of both church and minister. But this unexpected and preconcerted outburst of false and trivial criticism, accompanied as it was by anger and also by dishonesty and hypocrisy, on the part of a handful of men, looked to me to be very suspicious. "You are angry, therefore you are wrong," said a wise old philosopher. When men get mad, without being able or willing to state the reason for it, it is a sure sign that there is something wrong and dishonest about their anger. I became greatly interested in this curious phenomenon. For eighteen years my ministry had been one constant joy and success, and it would be a shameful thing, indeed, if I could not look this first real difficulty squarely in the face. Moreover, I was sure it contained a rich meaning for me and for the church at large. Since it is a common experience among churches, and certain to be, as I believe, increasingly common in the future unless preventive measures are taken, I regarded it as my duty to go to the heart of it and report what I found. Friends have sought to comfort me by the remark that such ugly

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

exhibitions are very common experiences in churches. Wherein is the comfort? The fact that an evil is common does not relieve its ugliness; it increases it. The more frequently it occurs, the greater the failure of the church.

Although feeling confident from the first that I knew its inner meaning, yet, because I was personally involved in it, I needed to make as sure as may be that no personal consideration influenced my judgment. I therefore tested it by a rigid examination, as if I were an outside third party. I speak the sober truth when I say that I should have been happy and greatly comforted, if I could have discovered anything I had done to justify this outbreak, which was doing the church so much moral damage. For in that case the solution of the problem would have been easy, and the proper course of action clear. When in the face of any wrong which involves others, one can honestly say, "I am the man — I am responsible for the difficulty and am willing to take the responsibility for it, and to undo it," that moment is one of the happiest of his life and cuts the knot of his trouble at one stroke. I have known such moments. I began now to search in myself for some cause sufficient to account for the trouble, but I found it not.

I naturally began with personal traits of character and conduct. The personal criticisms were so exactly the opposite of what was true that it

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

seemed to me they could not possibly account for the outbreak. But perhaps I am not a good judge of myself and I will not rely on myself. A little later, at a large public testimonial dinner given me by the Civic Association of my town, I was highly amused to note that the very traits of character which my little group of church critics said did not exist were the very traits selected by the speakers at the dinner for special praise. Even granting, however, that all the critics said was true, it has no bearing on the point at issue. For I was the same man before the criticisms as after they broke out. What we are wanting to know is why these men, who had loved and honored me before, so suddenly were turned into critics; why they discovered certain faults which they never saw before; and why they felt a sudden pious compulsion to canvass the town on Sunday afternoons to make known their new discovery to their neighbors. There must be a reason for such a radical change of attitude. There is, but it doth not yet appear.

Next I examined the record of my work; for every man ought to be perfectly willing to have his work judged by the one really legitimate test, that is, by its fruits. I remembered that when I came to the church its moral standing in the community was very low, due to a disgraceful disturbance with my immediate predecessor about which I had almost no information until

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

after I came. I proceeded to restore the church's moral standing. As a consequence of this condition, I had to tone up its spiritual life. I found almost all its departments needed to be reorganized. The young people's work was in such a condition that parents kept their children away from its meetings, so that it was too far gone for reform, and had to be entirely reconstructed. After a little it became one of the largest and most efficient in the state and my great joy and comfort. I was also enabled to solve the problem of the church's finances, which were in as bad condition as they well could be. Judged even by the bare mechanical standard of figures, I noticed that during my eight years of service the number of members received was 194 by letter and 147 by confession, a total of 341, or a yearly average of 42; that is, one for each working week of the entire time. I noticed that during the eight years the amount of money raised for new buildings was \$52,000; for current expenses \$85,949.23; and for benevolences \$38,989.25; a total of \$176,938.49, or a yearly average of \$22,117.31. These facts and figures need no comment. The impression they made on my mind was that there must be some extraordinary reason, far deeper than any little temporary differences, that would lead men to forget the immense service I had been permitted to render the church, and induce them to put their per-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

sonal interests above those of the church and disturb a pastorate that was so pleasant and so fruitful. There must be such a reason. What is it?

Then I wondered whether the quality of my preaching was responsible for the criticism. On this question I could not, of course, pronounce a correct judgment. For, however much or little my sermons might satisfy myself, they might not please others. But it did not seem probable that the sermons were responsible for the outbreak, when I noticed how frequently the leading men of the church had requested their publication. I turned to one of these published sermons and found an introductory note by one of the most highly respected men in the community and one of the heads of an old and prominent book publishing firm of New York. In it he makes the following statement: "I have heard many of the greatest preachers of the nineteenth century, including Beecher, Storrs, Spurgeon, Farrar, and others, and after this opportunity of knowing what good preaching is, I can say with confidence that Mr. Jackson is an unusually able and forceful preacher." I inquired whether this was more or less the general sentiment of the people and found that it was. The significant thing is that it was the publicly expressed opinion of most of my critics. What, then, can be the reason for the outbreak?

It is most embarrassing but most interesting

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

to analyze one's self in a situation like this. No balanced man could be driven to it unless a profound issue was at stake. It sounds egotistical, I know, but as a matter of fact it is exactly the opposite of egotism, for I never could have done it had I not completely lost myself in devotion to the principle at issue. I hope my readers will likewise forget the person and think only of the principle, for it is vitally important for the church at large.

Thus, by a long process of examination and elimination, I was compelled to conclude that the reason for the disturbance was just what I believed at the beginning it must be. It is this: I differed fundamentally with two small but influential groups of men in the church on two big questions, dogma and money. These groups may be most briefly and accurately described by saying that they are Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees have vested interests in money; the Pharisees vested interests in theology. It was these two groups that Jesus had his quarrel with. Neither class wanted the vital and practical religion which Jesus brought to them and they combined to kill him for preaching it. They have existed in the church throughout almost its entire history. It is not at all strange that they exist in it to-day. They are not bad men — there are many things about them which are very good; but the dominant

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

trait about them which makes them a menace to the church is this: the Sadducee type of man is one who thinks of life in material terms, chiefly, of course, in terms of money, and he applies this principle to the church, frankly maintaining that the church ought to reward him for his gifts of money by the right to dominate it; the Pharisee type of man is one who has a closed mind and a fixed theological belief, and thinks that religion is endangered if its conventional phraseology is changed.

I want to make it clear that I am not opposed to any rich man as such. I honor no man for his money nor for the lack of it. I am not the friend of the rich man nor the friend of the poor man, but only the friend of man. I base my respect for any man solely on the ground of his character and intelligence. I count many very rich men among my warm and congenial friends. They are assets of the highest value to the Kingdom of God. One such friend is one of the two or three richest men of my town. He is a trustee in a church, but seldom attends the meetings lest his great wealth might embarrass his fellow trustees. Another such friend is one of the best and richest men in New York City, a man whose character is a national asset. He has resigned not only from all the offices he held in his own church and the church at large, but resigned also his membership, as a protest against the

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

very evils which caused the trouble in my own church. I state these facts because when later in my story I make some radical statements concerning money and the church, I want no one to think I am making any sweeping assertion about all rich men. That would be manifestly unjust.

Fairness leads me to say one other thing about these groups of men. With the exception of an occasional social climber, who does not hesitate to stoop to any meanness and hypocrisy to gain his ends, and with the exception of the kind of man afflicted with the disease of egotism, who demands personal attention and seeks the limelight and finds it painful to serve on a committee without being its chairman — with the exception of men of this type, who, I suppose, are to be found everywhere, but who fortunately are not numerous, it is my conviction that all the other Sadducees and Pharisees in my church are entirely sincere in the attitude they take. So, I believe, were the Pharisees of Jesus' day, entirely sincere. It takes something more than sincerity to make a Christian. It takes character and intelligence. The Sadducee is the conventional rich man who puts money above character; the Pharisee is the conventional pious man who puts creed above religion. They are sincere, but they suffer from the blight of arrogance which slavery to money

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

always inflicts, and the blight of a closed mind which slavery to dogma always inflicts. The blight is so subtle that the men who suffer from it are not conscious of it. That is part of its penalty. If they could only be made conscious of it, they could be saved; but I fear it must be said of them as it was said of men of their class, when they returned to power after the French Revolution, "They learn nothing and they forget nothing." I use the terms "Sadducee" and "Pharisee" to describe these men, not with the slightest desire to do them any injury, but rather to do them a service, and especially in order to make clear the exact cause of the difficulty in the church, a difficulty repeated so frequently in its past history and certain to be repeated in the future, as it has been in multitudes of other churches, unless something is done to remove its cause.

The reason thus becomes apparent why the Sadducees and Pharisees, who on the surface seem to have so little in common, have always joined forces under certain conditions. They joined forces against Jesus. They joined forces for the same reason in my own church. The reason is that they are conservative and autocratic and opposed to all change. One class seeks to control the church through the power of money; the other through the power of dogma. The great body of my congregation was demo-

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

cratic and progressive. Two small groups were conservative and autocratic. This is the root cause of the trouble. No church can remain peaceful, if it is half-democratic and half-autocratic. Bring together in the same church a conservative man who believes in autocratic methods and a progressive man who believes in democratic methods and you have a conflict coming. No minister can satisfy both groups, unless he skillfully tries to dodge trouble by preaching platitudes; but such a policy is fatal to the spiritual life of the church and ruinous to his own moral integrity.

These two ideals are irreconcilable, and I ought to have known that a conflict between them was irrepressible, as the past history of my church abundantly demonstrated. I did know it, but I was hoping against hope. It is the settled policy of my life to accentuate the resemblances and not the differences among men; otherwise it would have been obviously impossible for me to hold together for twenty years two such churches as I had. Acting on this principle I tried patiently for several years, by teaching, by example, and by private suggestion, to lead these two groups in my church to abandon ideals which I regarded as unchristian, morally wrong, and hurtful to the cause for which the church stood. When the ideals for which I was standing became embarrassing to

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

these men, and it was evident that they must either accept them or oppose them, they did just what I was praying they would not do, they decided to reject them and took the initiative in making a disturbance. But they did not do it openly and honestly, but indirectly and cowardly. They persistently refused to talk over what everybody knew was the issue at stake, and never mentioned it. They were well aware that the overwhelming sentiment of the church and community was against them. They did what is usually done in such cases: they tried to divert attention from their own untenable position by making a mean and cowardly attack on the minister, as a means of self-defense.

The greatest tragedy in any public teacher's life occurs when he attempts and ardently desires to give to his fellow men something better than they are able or willing to receive. The tragedy is accentuated when they not only refuse it, but violently oppose it. Such an occurrence is "worse than a crime, it is a blunder." The pathetic lament of Jesus, "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together," reveals an experience familiar to public teachers throughout history. My own experience has illuminated with a new radiance the life of Jesus. It is to me no longer mere knowledge. It is now a *felt* knowledge, which is a very different and a more beautiful thing.

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

That a small group of church officers could repudiate ideals so obviously Christian and so heartily approved by the people, and that they could use cruel and dishonorable means to defeat them, seemed to me at the time impossible to conceive. Even now I can with difficulty believe that it has occurred, although I know it to be a fact.

The issue at stake, as I was saying, which was never mentioned, centered on questions concerning money and dogma. These questions will be fully explained in later chapters of my story, where I treat them constructively. It is sufficient for my present purpose to state the nature of the principle that caused the trouble and the amusing way in which the men opposed to it acted, which I can do most briefly by an illustration. For the situation is not new, and it is so common that I would not add one more to the list if I did not have what I think is a remedy to suggest. My experience was similar to that of John Frederic Oberlin, pastor of the church in Ban-de-la-Roche, Alsace. Beard, in his "Life" of Oberlin, describes how the church was astonished when their pastor proposed that they do such practical things for the community's welfare as build a schoolhouse and a road, which were both sorely needed. Instead of discussing the question itself with open minds and good spirits, they tried to defeat the plans by

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

making a personal attack on the minister. "The unruly spirits in the Ban were exceedingly active, and there are always unruly spirits everywhere if they can get half a chance to make trouble. Now they had their opportunity with Oberlin and they used it. They had already begun to criticize his preaching. He was too direct. He was too much in earnest. He was too radical. He was forever suggesting changes, and they protested against his innovations. The more headstrong decided to attack him personally. 'Our pastor is too fiery,' they said; 'we will cool him off. We will put him under the spout when he passes by.' Oberlin heard of the threat and lost no time in going to the headquarters of the opposers. 'Why, friends, if you expect to wet me, you do not know my horse. But if you really wish to do it, to make the thing easier for you, I will leave my horse at home, and go on foot, after this, to give you a chance.' After this interview they hesitated, and decided to rest with the threat. Oberlin had no intention of resigning. He felt that he was needed whether wanted or not. The people saw with unspeakable astonishment their pastor, bright and early Monday morning, with a pick on his shoulder, accompanied by three or four who were loyal to him, passing through the village to begin the road-making. Their wonder grew when they saw him at work, picking and

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

digging and shoveling away stones that he could not lift with his hands. There was manhood enough among his people to assert itself after such an appeal as this. It was an illustration of applied Christianity altogether new to them, and it was immediately followed by a great revival of practical religion in the village. The next day, a score were working with him, the next day following, fifty, until by the time they had reached the stream there were no doubters; all believed in good roads, and always had. Probably the last man to join the majority went home and told his wife that the original idea was his own, and that he would have proposed it to Oberlin but for the conviction that ministers ought to confine themselves to the gospel and let the labor question alone. If so, it may be that the trusting soul believed him. I find no record of this hypothetical man, but he must have been there — he always is — and there could scarcely have been an exception in this case to the ordinary experience of late comers in successful reforms."

Like Oberlin I had no intention of resigning. When the men responsible for the disturbance saw that their attack was deeply resented by the people and had no apparent effect on me, then they decided to use other methods. Almost all the trustees resigned in a body and some of them withdrew their contributions, thus using

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

money as a club to compel the congregation to yield to their wishes. I was greatly interested to see what the congregation would do. I kept on preaching as if nothing had happened, never referred to the disturbance from the pulpit and treated every one with the same courtesy as usual. The people elected new trustees, who represented ideals more in accord with their own and who conducted the financial work of the church with new, democratic, and efficient methods. What is still more important, they showed to the old trustees a Christian spirit and a patience, under constant nagging criticism, that was most beautiful. Their self-control under trying circumstances the people will always remember with gratitude and pleasure. It was a real triumph for the Christian cause.

It was my hope that the congregation would stand firm in its new freedom and proceed patiently and courteously to achieve the reforms for which during many years it had felt the need. It faced the biggest opportunity of its history. My hopes were dashed to pieces when the new officers made it clear that they wanted to compromise with the old trustees and asked me to do likewise. This I could not do. I agreed with them that it was right to show these men Christian courtesy, and I had never ceased to do so, but to surrender to their ideals seemed to me to be not Christian kindness, but the be-

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

trayal of a cause and of the people. I understand why these men wanted to surrender. For one thing they felt that the church could not be maintained without the money of the men who had withdrawn. I think they were mistaken in this opinion, but this was one of the chief among a complicated series of motives that influenced them. But with me it was different. I do not know what any other man's duty is; I know only what is my own. As a public teacher, what was my duty? I could have appealed to the people in an open contest and won by a handsome majority, and while I am essentially gentle by nature, I do not in the least object to a contest over anything that is big enough to fight about. But the motives that led the new officers to surrender to ideals, which I knew they did not believe in, made me suspicious and sowed a doubt in my mind, a doubt which later was abundantly justified. For the congregation likewise permitted the very men who had brought shame and dishonor on the church, and owed it a public apology, to get themselves elected on important committees and to prominent offices, as trustees and as superintendents of the Sunday-school.

But by an appeal to public opinion I could have easily won. No man had a better cause or a finer chance to win success for it. But how about the Christian cause? My major loyalty

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

is to the Christian cause, not to a particular church. Which is greater, the temporary good of one church or the permanent damage to Christian ideals, which a public contest necessarily involves? The question is by no means easy to decide, for nothing would give me keener remorse than the memory that I had failed to lead the people in a contest for a moral principle, whenever there was an opportunity to win a triumph for it. Some of the noblest members of the church, who often before had felt the same deep humiliation over many similar and previous outbreaks in the church, counseled me, "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." Had I believed that an open contest would have destroyed the idols that were blighting the church's spiritual life and soiling its good name, I certainly would have conducted it. But I came to feel that there was a better way. The severest contests in human life are those waged on the unseen battle-fields of human hearts between conflicting loyalties. After such a secret battle in my own heart, I decided that for the sake of the Christian religion, I would make no open contest. I continued to return good for evil, and show the church every courtesy, but I resigned as a protest against ideals which I believed were morally wrong. While I found the church disorganized and discouraged, I left it, to all outside appear-

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

ances, strong and united and very prosperous. But I left it with an ache in its heart and the memory of a gross injustice to be a burden for all time to come on all its right-minded members. For them I shall always have the tenderest sympathy. The reasons which led me to this conclusion are so significant for the church at large, that they will be fully stated in a later chapter of the story.

But why all this discussion? I wonder, after all, whether there is any vital issue at stake. Having never before seen such an exhibition of ugliness in a church, do I not take the Christian religion too seriously? It is a common occurrence, I am told. Is it not merely a case of a little sand getting into the running-gear of the church, which can be removed by a little diplomacy? If there is no vital cause at issue, all I desire to say is that I would have to give up a large degree of respect for my fellow men. I have more respect for sincere badness than for smallness. I can patiently bear almost anything except smallness, for in its presence all hope must be abandoned. Now it is an unescapable principle that whenever you have large effects, you must always have a cause large enough to account for them. If there is no vital issue at stake, why these frequent and profound disturbances in the churches? Are adult Christian men so weak and cowardly as to be defeated by

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

a little sand in the running-gears? In such cases the common-sense procedure is not to break or discard the machine, but remove the sand, which is not a difficult operation. I have more respect even for the men who make the disturbances than to suppose they would injure a whole church, sow seeds of cruel dissension in a community, run the risk of doing a lifelong damage to the religious ideals of boys and girls, and bring upon themselves the resentment and disrespect of their neighbors, all for the sake of trifling differences of opinion. It is not possible to believe.

Logic compels one to suppose that there must be an adequate cause to account for these disturbances, and he very soon discovers that his logic is amply supported by the actual facts in such a case. It is highly significant, to begin with, that the trifling explanations, which do not explain, are always advanced by men who cause the trouble, and by their friends who lack the courage to face the issue. Moreover, they make a particular effort to persuade others to accept their explanations. Why this anxiety? Are they fearful that the real truth will be discovered? Every one except themselves understands perfectly well the real reasons for the disturbance, and they do also. But wanting to hide the real reasons, and being compelled to invent false ones, they go to foolish extremes,

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

as men always do in like circumstances. I could write an amusing chapter in my own experience, setting forth the silly extremes to which able business men went in their effort to escape embarrassment and carry out their personal ambitions. But our problem is too serious to dwell on them here.

I shall state two such typical reasons of the more serious sort, one characteristic of the Pharisees, the other of the Sadducees,—reasons which show to what false extremes they usually go, but reasons which at the same time clearly indicate the great issue at stake, showing how impossible it is to escape it, however far afield they travel in the attempt to do so.

The Pharisees of my church said they opposed me because I was not “spiritual.” At the first this greatly distressed me, because that is the very thing that I thought I was. Indeed, it was the very complaint I had in my mind against them, but I did not say so. In the presence of this apparent puzzle, I found illumination in history. I remembered that, in all like conflicts, the critics usually said the very opposite of what was afterward found to be true. For example, Socrates is now universally regarded not only as the greatest, but as the most virtuous and the most spiritual, man of his age and country. Yet his accusers judicially condemned him to death on the charge of impiety and immorality.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

That is, his critics mistook him for the exact opposite of what he was. Again, to take an example which John Stuart Mill says is the only one that can be named after that of Socrates without being an anti-climax, the same thing is true in the case of Jesus. He, who for all later centuries and for all nations has become the great moral and spiritual leader of men, was judicially condemned as a blasphemer, as an unspiritual man. His critics likewise mistook him for the exact opposite of what He was. If it did not now seem to us so tragic and so contemptible, there would be something extremely amusing in the sight of the pious priest, Annas, rending his robes lest he be defiled by the "unspiritual" remarks of Jesus. The men responsible for these two judicial iniquities were no doubt sincere, and orthodox Christians of to-day would have done just as they did, had they been in their place.

The problem before the church to-day is the same problem which all past centuries have had to face. The Pharisees in my church, who said I was not spiritual, are entirely sincere. They stand for the spirituality of the conventional pious dogmatists, while the spiritual ideals which I preached were based on the type of spirituality embodied in Jesus. The two types must conflict. Thus it becomes clear that while the objection raised by my conventionally pious

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

critics seemed to them to be removed to a safe distance from the cause of the disturbance, which centered in money and dogma, after all it touches very near the heart of the trouble. For one of the deepest needs of the church to-day is that it should acquire a new conception of what a true "saint" is according to the ideals of Jesus, as I think we shall see later in the story. The artificial, and to me false, conception of "sainthood" entertained to-day by many Christian leaders is what is keeping multitudes of good men out of the church or out of active participation in it.

The other criticism, the one made by the Saducees, was that I lacked "tact." This at the first did not disturb me so much as it puzzled me. For it is one of the chief things I prided myself on possessing. I acquired it at a great price. I had for years made a careful study of the "subjunctive-mode" method of handling my fellow men, so as to avoid the "indicative-mode" method. I have all my life been constantly used to settle all kinds of private and public quarrels, which required extraordinary tact. In order to show that this criticism has no meaning when applied to me, I am tempted to be very personal. Only three months before this criticism was made, I headed a committee of twenty-one men in my town to settle a complicated dispute between the Mayor and the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

Board of Education. This fact made the men who made the criticism look either stupid or willfully perverse. And now, during the week while I am writing this chapter, a group of the leading men of my old Pennsylvania church have asked me to preach in the church for a few months in order to heal bitter dissensions caused by the same problem that disturbed my New Jersey church, alleging that, because of my "tact" and kindly spirit, I can render them this service.

I am thus frank, because I want to make emphatic my conviction that this question of "tact," always made so much of in all such disputes, is a snare and a delusion.

"Tact" is the long suit of the conventionally rich man. He talks more about it than any other one thing at the time of a church disturbance. He cares very little about the theology of a new candidate, but he must have "tact." Every time a minister or a college professor has a fundamental disagreement with his trustees, we are deluged by an avalanche of editorials on the beauty and importance of "tact." They are so uniform in tenor as to make one feel they are "inspired," and so they are.

Now all of us understand the beauty of "tact." We admit it. We all know the type of man who prides himself on calling "a spade a spade," and who usually means that he calls

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

"a spade a damned shovel." We freely admit the indispensable importance of courtesy in all human relationships, but tact and courtesy, are they the same? By no means. Tact has little if any bearing on the problem we are discussing. It has been so often used as a blind to divert attention from moral issues that the word has acquired a new and different meaning, so much so that an honest man finds it difficult to use, unless he explains what he means by it. It has come to mean diplomacy, subterfuge, compromise, the clever side-stepping of moral issues. As applied to ministers, it has come to mean the ability to preach the principles of Jesus in such softened and diluted form as not to arouse any one's conscience, or disturb any vested interests. I do not object to tact; I practice it to the limit. What I object to is the confusion of tact with moral loyalty, which is a totally different question. Does any man for a moment imagine that any amount of tact which Jesus might have used—and He was an expert in its use—would have enabled him to live in peace with the Pharisees of his day? Certainly not. Nothing could have done so except the surrender of his principles, and that would have meant spiritual suicide and the failure of his life.

The conventionally rich men of my church made a lavish use of the question of "tact," with which they tried to bury the cause of the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

trouble, and no doubt thought they had successfully buried it; and yet their insistence on the use of tact pointedly suggests the very question at issue. It constitutes, indeed, my chief complaint against the church. Its only policy is tact, compromise, "safety first." Whenever a new plan of work is proposed, church officers usually consider first of all, not the reasons why it should be done, but the reasons why it should not be done. Believing, as I do, that there can be no such thing as moral neutrality, I tried to persuade my church to adopt moral loyalty as its policy. Because it refused to do so, I resigned. It is not what a church wants to do or what is pleasant to do, but what it ought to do; that is its true guiding principle. Whenever any church reduces its policy to a game of diplomacy, it banishes duty from its programme and betrays its own cause. It is my conviction that the first and greatest need of the churches in general, both in their ideals and practices, is to distinguish between "tact" and moral loyalty and then courageously to act on this distinction.

Thus it seems to me to be clear that the question at issue is not only not the question of "tact," but that "tact" is deliberately used as a blind to conceal the real question at issue. At any rate, if a lack of tact is the cause of the frequent disturbances in churches, it is idle to

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

talk about it. It is merely a question of individual ministers cultivating the art of tact, which is a private matter and not for public discussion. The problem of church disturbances at once becomes a very simple one and the remedy quite obvious, however disagreeable it may be to take or to administer. It is the remedy that the men responsible for the disturbance always apply. The remedy is just to change the minister, to treat him like any other hired man in our cruelly selfish industrial age, utilize him for all that can be made out of him, and then scrap him like a piece of old machinery or a pair of old shoes.

All this is perfectly simple and also perfectly hopeless. The attempt to cure the disease by changing ministers is worse than a foolish waste of time. It is like the attempt to mend a watch by changing the hands on the dial, when its mainspring is broken. To expect the church's machinery to run right without a new mainspring — that is, a new heart — is stupidity itself. To use one minister after another as a victim to personal interests and ambitions, may seem the easy way of escape from the performance of an unpleasant duty, but in the long run it is the hard way, besides being the wrong way. "It is worse than a crime, it is a blunder." It is to-day causing the church to commit slow suicide. It is not wisdom or economy or kindness to

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

use a poultice, when it is obvious that a knife is necessary.

The truth is that the situation is not hopeless at all, because the causes of these disturbances, while not simple but profound, are curable, if we apply the right remedy. They are perfectly well understood by every one, except by those who cause the disturbances, and they do not want to understand the causes or to acknowledge it, if they did understand them. After I resigned from my church, many of its noblest members begged me to state to them the cause and the remedy for these frequent disturbances in our church. I induced them to answer their own questions out of their own knowledge, for I was sure they already knew. Most all of us understand clearly what the trouble is, only we have not had the courage to say so.

Come, let us muster up the courage to be honest. I grant that it is most disturbing to a minister or a church honestly to face the issue and what it involves. What is it? It is my maturely formed and settled conviction that the root causes of the church's present difficulty are lack of intellectual honesty, lack of moral courage, and lack of a social gospel. To put it positively, I would say that the three things which now blight the church's life are the domination of the church by dogma, by money, and by denominationalism. If we desire to group the

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

causes of the church's trouble under a single principle, we would say, it is a lack of democracy in its religious convictions, in its conception of money, and in its treatment of people. In this chapter the aim has been to make clear, through an actual experience, that the disturbances in churches are of such a nature that they necessitate fundamental causes to account for them. I have stated what I think are those fundamental defects. They will be treated fully and constructively in the chapters which follow.

I need only add to this statement that the sincerity of my belief that these are the causes of the church's present perplexity is sufficiently indicated by the fact that on their account I was willing to surrender a \$5000 income, \$4000 in money and a beautiful parsonage, the rental value of which is more than \$1000. What a fool I am to sacrifice a comfortable income and an exceptionally beautiful house, all because I would not compromise my moral convictions, says the man of conventional standards. Certainly; but then my moral and intellectual integrity is not for sale at \$5000 a year. If I were to sell my manhood for money, I would want a far larger sum than this. In fact, it is not for sale at all. When a man's self-respect and integrity are gone, life is not worth living at any price. I have thus dwelt at length on the process by which I have come to my conclusions con-

## (A COMMUNITY CHURCH

cerning the causes of the church's difficulty, because these conclusions will be vigorously combated by those responsible for the difficulty. It is to their personal interest to minimize the difficulties. In their effort to do so, they have often gone to the height of the ridiculous, by using every conceivable and inconceivable explanation excepting the true one. Their aim is to conceal the main question by raising a cloud of dust over side issues. It is an old and familiar trick, and ought not to confuse any man who is able or willing to think clearly. Although clear thinking is hard labor, and therefore rare, nevertheless this trick has become so apparent that it has ceased to deceive the people.

The serious nature of the discussion which lies before us is clearly indicated in the question which heads this chapter — "Can a minister be an honest man?" Resigning my pastorate for the reasons which I have stated, it is natural to suppose that it was not merely the question of leaving a particular church that confronted me, but a problem far more profoundly significant. I saw clearly that, if I left my church for these reasons, my action necessarily involved the possibility of refusing to accept any church. The large majority in my church are progressive and forward-looking, very much more so than in the average church. If, then, such a church was defeated by a small group in its effort to adopt

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

modern ideals and methods, how much hope would there be in the average church? I could easily get a call from another church by skillfully concealing my ideals, as is very frequently done. But this kind of diplomacy, to give it a very euphemistic name, is ruinous to a man's moral character, and besides it is futile. If I should accept a church on these conditions and then attempt to lead it up to modern ideals, would not the effort naturally produce the same results already experienced in my own church? Personally the very thought of repeating such a petty and ignoble experience was extremely distasteful. It was likewise unchivalrous to ask my wife to do so, although her heroism is equal to it. But what is more important, how far is it the duty of a grown, able-bodied man, who earnestly desires to render a real service to the Kingdom of God, to spend his time just trying to preserve peace in a church, so that it can succeed in the glorious task of holding its own? As a friend of mine in New York, who is now doing a constructive work of international importance, told me, he left the ministry because he did not feel it was his duty any longer to spend his time in preventing "the saints" from devouring each other.

If, then, I could not consent to remain with my own church on these terms, how could I accept any other church on like terms? This was

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

the real problem I was facing. It very soon presented itself in concrete form. During the two-year period of disturbance in my church I received overtures from four churches, two of them as large and important as my own. Two of them asked me to preach as a candidate and two requested me to permit my name to be presented. I could not persuade myself to do either, although, before I reached this conclusion, I did preach in one of the four churches in order to discover its condition. The reason why I could not consider any one of these churches is because exactly the same condition existed in all of them which existed in my own, and on account of which I was leaving it.

One of these churches was my old church in Pennsylvania. Some of its leading men urged me to be willing to consider a call. A little later the following petition, signed by over a hundred young people of the community, was presented to the officers of the church: "Wishing to express our desire to have Rev. Henry E. Jackson as our pastor, we young people of the — Presbyterian church respectfully recommend that the session earnestly consider the matter of his acceptance of the pastorate of this church. Dr. Jackson has been away from us for over nine years, yet his Christian spirit and influence still remain. Having known and loved him in our earlier years and knowing of his work since, we feel

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

that his influence and personality would be a great blessing to our church and to our town."

All this, of course, made a strong appeal. This being my first church and I being its first pastor, the memories and the idealism of my youth made it very dear to me. The happy relationship existing between the church and myself made me hesitate to upset them, for even under these exceptionally favorable conditions, I knew that my convictions as to the nature of the Christian religion and the function of the church would bring me into conflict with certain groups in the church. My successor had just left the church broken-hearted and the congregation was disturbed by contentions. While the cause of the trouble is very complex, yet it originated in the Board of Trustees and I knew I would face the same difficulty, which existed in my New Jersey church. Therefore, I stated to the men who urged me to come to the church, certain of my present convictions about needed changes in the church, and I preached a sermon in the college chapel in the town, where the church is located, in order to test them. I suspected it would prevent the call from being extended to me, and it did.

Is it possible, I wonder, for me to remain an honest minister and accept a call from any average church? In answering this question our best method is to consider what are those de-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

fects, in the present organization of the church, which are doing damage to any minister's moral and intellectual integrity. We can thus see the problem which I believe confronts hundreds of ministers already in the ministry, and prevents other hundreds of the best young men from entering it. In this way we can best discover and state constructively those radical and fundamental reforms which I believe the church must be willing to accept, if it is not to defeat its own aims and betray the cause in which it has enlisted. What these reforms are will be considered in the succeeding chapters of the story. To persuade the churches to accept them is my purpose in writing. I tell the story in personal terms in order to make it concrete and as forcible as I may.

In starting on the quest for an answer to our question, I desire to make emphatic the statement that I have not the slightest feeling of personal resentment toward the men who made the disturbance in my New Jersey church. The issue involved is too big for that. My humiliation over the breakdown of the Christian religion among the officers of my church prevents me from indulging in the expensive luxury of personal anger. I am absorbed in the fate of the principle at stake. The men whom a Christian minister has once loved and served he can never hate, however much he may desire to do so. There is no

## CAN A MINISTER BE HONEST?

finality in friendship. I have no personal enemy whom I recognize as such. I radically disagree with the moral and religious ideals of these gentlemen and would oppose them on all possible occasions, but I bear them no ill-will. Indeed, the poverty of their spiritual outlook on life made a strong appeal to my sympathies. If they had only been conscious of their poverty, I could have helped them and very gladly would have done so.

Moreover, to be perfectly fair I am compelled to say that I owe them a debt of gratitude. I can say of them what Joseph said of his brethren: "They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." By their opposition to my ideals, they removed from me the stigma and curse which Jesus pronounced upon the "safe and sane" negatives of whom all men speak well, the type of Christian who is never loyal enough to his ideals to arouse any opposition to them or to himself. By their opposition they awakened my devotion to the greatest of all causes, in which I have now enlisted for the remainder of my life. By their opposition they enabled me to make an invaluable discovery. I had known — what is a commonplace in human history — that anything new and good has always encountered opposition just because it was new and because it was good. But I had not realized that I had any contribution to make to my fellow men which was good enough to be worthy of oppo-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

sition. Now I suspected that I had. It was a thrilling discovery. During the twenty years of my ministry, the two-year period of disturbance yielded me more joy and ecstasy than any previous period had. I began to see that the real value of a man's contribution to any moral reform is frequently to be measured by the amount of opposition it meets, as Jesus' experience abundantly demonstrates. Unexpected comfort came to me at this point of my experience when I learned that Edward Rowland Sill had made the same discovery. His friend Professor Royce reports that he often used the distressing fact of opposition and defeat as a sort of test of the spirituality of things. "Were they good," he said, "willfulness would assail them the more surely." Once, when he was a little weary because of the hatred that he had met with during some of his undertakings in a very good cause, Royce said to him, by way of a sort of conventional comfort and of friendly admonition at once: "Why do you work so hard as you do for the good of people who only misunderstand you, after all? They don't deserve the good things that you offer, for they are people who won't and can't appreciate your trouble. Why cast pearls before swine? They only turn and rend you." "Ah, Royce," replied Sill, "but one does n't quite surely know that they are pearls, that he casts, until he feels the tusks."

## II

### THE CHURCH AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

*When the philosophic minds of the world can no longer believe its religion, or can only believe it with modifications amounting to an essential change of its character, a transitional period commences, of weak convictions, paralyzed intellects, and growing laxity of principle, which cannot terminate until a renovation has been effected in the basis of their belief leading to the evolution of some faith, whether religious or merely human, which they can readily believe, and when things are in this state, all thinking or writing which does not tend to produce such a renovation, is of very little value beyond the moment.*

JOHN STUART MILL

## II

### THE CHURCH AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

WENDELL PHILLIPS, an elegant patrician, a refined scholar, a welcomed member of cultured society, was well started in a professional career which promised abundant honors and financial rewards. One October day, looking out of his office windows he saw Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist, assailed, kicked, dragged to jail by a mob for daring to say that a man's right to liberty was inalienable. "With the setting of that October sun vanished forever the career of prosperous ease, the gratification of ordinary ambition." That day he acquired a cause which became a public passion for life. Years of conflict followed, then a noble triumph.

What the episode of the Garrison mob did for Wendell Phillips, the experience with my church, narrated in the preceding chapter, did for me. It awakened me to ideals of which I had long been only partially conscious. It equipped me with a cause and vitalized my devotion to it. Principal Cairn's last message to his students was this: "Tell them that the chief thing is to forget self utterly in the service of a great cause."

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

Through a Gethsemane experience I have discovered my "great cause," big enough to command the undivided allegiance of my life. The cause in which I have consciously and definitely enlisted for life is the oldest and the newest of causes: *it is the cause of freedom, stated in terms of intellectual honesty in the attempt to discover God as a reality and freedom stated in terms of moral courage in the attempt to apply the principles of Jesus to all human needs.* To achieve freedom in some form has been the chief goal of man's endeavor throughout human history. But it becomes a new and strangely vital fact, when a man makes this cause his own. Then for him it comes to be not mere knowledge, but felt knowledge, a very different thing. Then he not merely gets a cause, but the cause gets him. It is the kind of cause which produces a motor reaction. He must *do* something about it or lose his self-respect.

My twenty years' experience in the church makes it clear to me that the church now suffers from three fundamental blights, from which she must free herself if she wants to avoid moral and spiritual shipwreck, and if she desires to be largely useful to the Kingdom of God. These three blights are the domination of dogma, the domination of money, and the domination of sectarianism. A chapter will be devoted to the discussion of each of these tyrannies, in the

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

terms of my own experience with a view to arriving at certain constructive conclusions, to which the facts, I think, must lead any fair and open-minded man.

The subject of the present chapter is intellectual freedom. With the exception of a few brief periods in its history, the church as an organization has uniformly been the enemy of freedom, while the Christian religion itself has been freedom's best friend. There is something tragically humorous in the fact that the church has always persecuted the prophets of liberty and then has tried to regain influence with the people by building monuments to their memory. The church's avowed guide-book is largely composed of the achievements and failures of the devotees of freedom, almost every one of whom was persecuted and most of whom suffered martyrdom in its behalf. And yet out of their writings the church has composed her Bible apparently without the slightest consciousness of the humor of her act. If the church can only acquire a sense of humor, she could be saved. It would give her a sense of moral values. If the church once discovered the meaning of the Bible, it could not continue to be the enemy of freedom. The Bible is the only book I know of which has no title. The word "Bible" is the Greek word for book. It is like saying this book is a book, which is sufficiently obvious without saying so. If we

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

should give to the Bible a short descriptive title, I think the title which most accurately describes its subject, covers its contents, and states its purpose is the word "Freedom." It is a fascinating body of literature whose dominant purpose is to point the way to freedom — intellectual, spiritual, economic freedom. If the church once discovered the Bible, it could not continue to oppose the chief idea for which its guide-book stands, without stultifying itself.

All my life I have regarded it as every man's moral duty to be intellectually honest, especially a man who attempted to be a teacher of the Christian religion. For twenty-five years I have been a special and close student of the Bible, and during that time I have become increasingly enamoured with its insistence on the moral value of freedom. I assumed, therefore, that the church would naturally accept the chief principle of its own professed guide-book. To my amazement I found just the opposite to be true. The leaders of my church did not want the Bible to be taught; they wanted their own interpretation of it to be taught, which I regarded as a misinterpretation. I understand that men may honestly differ widely in their interpretations, and my own principle of freedom leads me to grant freely to every other man entire liberty in forming and stating his own views. I did not ask them to accept any opinions of mine. The only

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

thing I asked them to do was to think, to submit all interpretations to open discussion. The point I am making is that my officers refused to allow any candid and honest examination of the Bible at all. After I had finished two large building enterprises in my New Jersey church, I proceeded to do what I was waiting for the opportunity to do, start a men's Bible class for the candid study of the life of Jesus. The spiritual condition of my church was such that I believed its greatest need was to know the person and teaching of Jesus. I believe this is the greatest need of all men the world over. It is especially the need of men inside the church, because for them the person and teaching of Jesus have been covered up by layer after layer of dogmatic misinterpretation, and obscured by the false sentimentality of popular church hymns. It would be nothing else than a thrilling discovery, if church members once saw the person and teaching of Jesus as they are presented in the New Testament, and such a vision would regenerate the church. This, of course, is the object I had in view.

For eighteen months I begged my officers to start such a class, and I offered to teach it, for this was the chief specialty of my ministry, and my officers knew it when they called me to the church. But I insisted that the subject ought to be the life of Jesus, and that the method ought

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

to be an honest examination and open discussion of the facts. Finally they reluctantly consented to start such a class. But they started in on exactly the opposite policy and they refused me the opportunity to teach it. They did this in an indirect way. They appointed a committee to draft a plan. They investigated several men's classes in the neighborhood, most of which had proved failures, and many of which had to be abandoned, and our committee adopted the same plan; that is, a presentation, by a different speaker each Sunday, of a harmless and innocent commonplace with no free discussion. The president, who is the manager of a magazine published in New York City, took the position that a study of the life of Jesus is too disturbing for a men's class. He did not say so openly, but to the members of his committee, and persuaded them to agree with him. I knew the class was dead before it started, and frankly warned the committee of the danger involved. But seeing they were determined, I felt the best thing to do was to surrender for the sake of peace and let the committee learn from experience, during which experiment I showed the officers every courtesy, attending the class myself as often as possible, and always taking whatever part in it the committee asked me to take.

The class started with about thirty men, but the number gradually began to dwindle, al-

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

though every effort was made to maintain it, by advertisement, weekly post-card notices, and personal invitations. After the lack of interest became apparent, a little group of members, without any slightest hint from me, brought pressure on the president to arrange for some studies in the life of Christ as the one thing that would build up the class. Under this pressure from the men, the president secured a man outside of the church to give four addresses on the life of Christ. These were not honest, inductive studies of the facts of Christ's life in any sense. They were theological lectures in which the conclusions were all determined before the examination began. The jury was "fixed" before the case was tried. Any study which is not inductive in its method is certain to be non-progressive. Then the men began an open discussion and objected to the conclusions presented. They did it courteously, for the lecturer was a sweet-spirited and attractive man personally. They just disagreed with him so fundamentally that the lectures were not continued.

The president was panic-stricken. With some of his committee he came to me to ask whether he ought to ask him to continue the lectures. I answered that it would be safe to ask him back, provided an opportunity for open discussion were given and provided he would ask some man to present the question from the opposite

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

standpoint. Otherwise it would be fatal to the success of the class to ask him. "If the men feel that you are trying to force on them a preconceived dogmatic position, they will resent it as they have already done. Unless the leader shows intellectual honesty, the class is doomed. I disagree with him fundamentally, but that is why I want to hear what he has to say. It is like my attitude when I went to Princeton Theological Seminary. Before I went, I saw it was very probable that I should differ radically from the Princeton position, but I chose to go there in order that the so-called orthodox position could be stated to me by its friends. I want to be fair to it."

But the open discussion which I regarded as fruitful of much good and much growth in spiritual life was the very thing the president feared. He did not invite the lecturer back, but returned to his old method. He tried to make the men, who had started the open discussion, feel as if they were heretics for expressing an honest doubt. This, of course, means death to any influence the church might have over the large body of self-respecting men who are already estranged from the church. The class lingered on for a few months more until the attendance dropped to four or five, and was then finally abandoned.

When the officers of the class saw that it was a flat failure, I hoped that they would be manly

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

and honest enough to say so, and at the least give me a chance to conduct one on the lines I had urged upon them, and which the men obviously desired. Then I received my second shock. The officers did nothing of the kind. The president, to save his own face, did all he could in the most dishonorable ways to make trouble between the minister and the church, thus adding to his moral cowardice a great moral wrong and personal injustice, although he acted the part of one of the most pious and orthodox deacons in the church.

This experience was one of the deepest disappointments of my life, not on my own account, because I had many other avenues for service, but for the sake of the church itself. It missed one of the biggest of opportunities. It could have had a class of at least a hundred men engaged in a sincere study of the life of Jesus. This would have enlisted a large number of men who are now outside the church and it would have meant new life and inspiration for the church.

While my church's lost opportunity was the source of profoundest regret to myself and to the best men in the church, its significance for others lies in the general principles it embodies. What conclusions does it compel us to draw? Does it mean that a minister to-day has no opportunity to make an honest study of the life

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

of Jesus in his own church? That there is an impassable gulf fixed between the pious leaders in the church and the good men outside? That the leaders of the church are so ambitious for power that their guiding principle is rule or ruin? That the leaders of the church have not yet learned the primary principle of Christian freedom, namely, to differ in opinion with their fellow Christians without differing in feeling? That the leaders of the church seem totally ignorant of the fact that there is no subject in which the average man, both inside and outside the church, is more interested than religion, and no study he would rather engage in than the life of Jesus, provided it is an honest, inductive study?

The experience I have narrated means all this and more. It means that the average man, in the church and community, is eager to know the principles of Jesus as stated in his memorabilia, but that the men in control of the church refuse to give them this knowledge. They are willing to give only an outgrown, impractical, theological interpretation of the life of Jesus, and they employ men who will teach this and nothing else. It means that the traditional blindness of the church has gone to such stupid extremes that men outside the church will force her to discover the book she has adopted as her own guide-book and pretends to follow. In view of

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

these facts I thank God for the printing-press. We now have the right at least to read the Bible, although there is still danger that the Sermon on the Mount may be censored in war-times as a dangerous document.

These conclusions I think the facts would compel any fair-minded man to make. These are not only my own conclusions, but my settled convictions after a large experience of twenty years. I could give many pointed illustrations to support and demonstrate each of them. These conclusions, it ought to be carefully noted, do not constitute a charge against the membership of the church as a whole. For one group of men, inside and outside the church, clearly revealed their attitude by refusing to attend the class, by requesting the life of Jesus to be presented, and then by forsaking the class when they saw the cowardly and shut-minded policy pursued by the officers. I admired the men for taking this stand. The above conclusions constitute a charge against the leaders of the church.

The night the committee finally rejected the plan that I urged upon it and adopted the plan that was put into operation, a member of the committee who agreed with my ideals, but who voted against my plan, attempted to give me comfort by saying that the reason why he voted against the plan was that he did not want to see me conduct an honest study of the life of Jesus

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

because it would hurt my standing and influence in the church. He meant, of course, that I would lose my influence with two small groups, some of the deacons and some of the trustees, for my ideals were popular with every one else, as the subsequent history of the class demonstrated.

This man meant well. He believed in "safety first." He did not want me to lose my job. I appreciated his kindly thought for my welfare. But that night I paced my study most of the night. "My God!" I said, "has it come to this pass in the Christian church? Cannot a minister conduct an honest study of the life of Christ without losing his influence in his own church?" I think the man was entirely correct as to the fact, for later I did lose my job because of the very reason he stated; but I believed that a few men in the church ought to be disturbed rather than not preach honestly the principles of the New Testament, for this was my particular business in the world. This is what I entered the ministry to do.

The moral and spiritual struggle of that night will long live in my memory. It was the parting of the ways for me as a man and as a minister. The issue I faced was clear-cut and vital. Thomas Rain in his study of Browning states it accurately. Speaking of the advantage a poet has over a professional minister because of his greater freedom, he says: "His mind is free to

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

take its own way and come to its own conclusion without fear of consequences. With the clergy it is not so; there is one particular conclusion they must come to or suffer; they must obey orders or be cast out. So they refrain from inquiry altogether, missing the fine fascination of it; or, like Renan's country priest, they inquire and keep silent. And what a silence! What a price it costs them! They go about with firm, closed lips, half dazed, miserably devouring their hearts. In all the world could there be a heavier cross-bearing than this, than having live thought shut up in your mind as in a prison? Always shut up, beat as it may at the bars for utterance. It is one of the things that ruin men." It was this issue which I faced and could not flinch. I felt that to do so would mean not only spiritual ruin for myself, but disloyalty to the cause in which I had enlisted. I decided to face it and take the consequences.

But I do not believe in doing anything important in a hurry. I wanted to be perfectly fair and discover the exact facts as they are. I wanted to demonstrate to myself whether a man could be a Christian minister and retain his moral and intellectual integrity. I agree with President Hadley of Yale that leadership is not worth having, if it has to be secured by the sacrifice of intellectual straightforwardness. I therefore planned a test for my church as a

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

whole by preaching a course of sermons from the pulpit. I gave an entire winter to it from October to June. In order to be as considerate as possible, I chose a subject which I thought at the time would be a fairly mild and conservative test, but pointed enough to be a real and honest one. I chose the two outstanding documents of the Christian religion, "The Ten Commandments" and "The Beatitudes," which I thought the Christian church ought to stand for, if it could stand for anything. I resolved to be strictly honest in my handling of the subject. I realized that it is a dangerous and radical thing to be honest, but I had already counted the full probable cost of such a course and was willing to pay the price. "It's cheap at half the price." I repeatedly insisted that I asked no one to agree with my interpretations or conclusions. I asked only that my message be given a respectful hearing. My guiding principle was Plato's motto, "Let us follow the argument wherever it leads." I thought no honest church could object to Plato's principle.

The results of this test were startling and ought to be profoundly significant to those interested in the present condition of the Christian church. To begin with, I had one glorious year of freedom in preaching. I never had such a happy experience before. The consciousness of the vital importance of the message I was

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

preaching and the consciousness of sincerity and honesty in stating it gave a strange new sense of joy and power. It was like a rebirth into a new world. It was like the coming of springtime to my mind and heart.

After I had started this course I discovered that the test was far more acid than I had thought or planned it to be. But having decided to follow "where the argument leads," I could not, of course, turn back. Besides, I should have been too ashamed to harbor the suggestion that the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes could not be preached in a Christian church. I discovered, for example, that the Ten Commandments had been wholly treated as rules of private morality, but that they were not intended to be such. They were intended to be laws of public morality; that is, they were, as a matter of fact, the constitution of an actual nation. They treat, moreover, the practical, political, and economic questions which concern a nation's life. To treat them honestly, therefore, I had to interpret them with reference to the ideals and practices of the Hebrew Republic. The church has lacked the moral courage to treat the Commandments for what they actually are, and to save its self-respect it has obscured and compromised their true meaning and finally given them a decent burial by using them for decorative purposes in the church

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ritual. To such an extent has the true meaning of the Ten Commandments been lost that no book has yet been written on them treating them for what the Old Testament clearly shows them to be, the constitution of a living nation. After my course of sermons treating them in this way, I can well understand why the church has produced no such book. It would be too disturbing to a dogmatic religion and to vested interests. I discovered likewise that the Beatitudes were still more pointed and searching than the Commandments, in their treatment of vital and disturbing questions.

The effect produced on the church by these two courses of sermons is highly significant. From a certain group of deacons and trustees they met opposition and constant criticism. Strenuous objection was made even to the presentation of some of the subjects. For example, to the seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and to the seventh Beatitude, "Blessed are the pacifists." This group of officers ventured occasionally to come, but after a little they refused to listen to the sermons. They were literally preached out of the church. Two months before the course was over, a curious thing happened. Two trustees, who agreed heartily with my ideals, but whose leading principle was compromise, came to me and suggested that I needed a vacation, and if

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

I would go to the seashore and do no more preaching for that year, they would see that all my expenses were paid. I would not say that this suggestion was not sincerely made, for I never question any man's motives until something more than his word compels me to do so. But the suggestion seemed to me to be suspicious and humorous. I was perfectly well so far as I knew, and I was having the time of my life in the pulpit. Most of the officers were absent and I had the cordial support of the people. No officers had shown the slightest solicitude about my health before. Why should they at this particular time, especially since they knew that within the short period of two months I was to have a long summer vacation? It looked as if these men feared that the sermons were digging between the officers and the people a deep gulf, which would be hard to bridge over, and wanted them discontinued. If this was their motive, their fear was well founded, for this is the effect the sermons were producing, although the aim of the sermons was quite the contrary. They were designed as a test both to people and officers, to furnish the officers a programme big enough to lead them to forget their petty differences and personal ambitions, and to lead both officers and people to better ways of thinking and living.

The pathetic fact about this experiment was

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

that this group of deacons and trustees not only failed to respond to this appeal, but were made worse by it. This result did not at all surprise me, but I had hoped against hope for something better. The outstanding result of this trial, which is most significant for the future welfare of the Christian cause, was the enthusiastic response of the people. For twenty years my preaching had never met such response before. The spiritual and mental life of the people grew by leaps and bounds. I received between twenty and thirty separate requests to publish these two courses in book form, so that the people could study them carefully in private. These requests were repeated frequently during the winter and have been repeated since I left the church.

This experience is significant of much which I believe is typical of churches in general. What does it mean? I discovered that the ideals of the people and the ideals of their intrenched officers are as far apart as the poles. I discovered that when the Christian religion is honestly preached, the people will respond to it. I discovered that a Christian minister cannot present the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes as they are, without losing his position as a consequence. I resigned my position one year before it was to take effect. This gave me added freedom to make the experiment under the

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

most favorable conditions, for if the minister is to leave so soon, there is more probability that the officers will endure his message without making trouble for him. If I had not intended to leave the church before this course of sermons, it is clear to me that I should have been compelled to do so after they were delivered.

I cannot, of course, say that this result would follow in all other churches. But my own experience and my own observation and wide acquaintance with other churches, and the fact that my own church is far more progressive than the average church, all lead me to the conviction that in at least ninety per cent. of the churches, if the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes were honestly preached, a group of deacons and trustees would combine and take steps, either openly or by subterfuge, to remove the minister. I realize that this is a startling statement to make, but I do not see how the facts warrant any other conclusion. If any minister doubts its truth, all he needs to do is to try the experiment. But if he has a wife and children depending upon him for support, I warn him beforehand of the danger he runs in the attempt.

What does this mean? What is the root cause of the difficulty? What ails the church, that experiences like mine are repeated to-day so frequently in churches of almost all denomina-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

tions? The first cause, although not the only cause of this condition of things, is the obvious fact that the church as an organization is not intellectually honest. It is not intellectually honest because it is a slave to dogmatic creeds, either openly expressed or privately assumed.

I am not here discussing the content or worth of any particular creed. I am discussing the question of intellectual honesty, which is a moral question. It is the custom in Congregational churches for a minister, *before* he is ordained or installed, to make to a council and to his church a full statement of his religious experience and his views. Dr. Amory H. Bradford urged me to take this exercise seriously in the preparation of my statement. This I gladly did and made a full and honest statement of my convictions. Dr. Bradford and others requested that it be put into print. It was afterward published by Revell & Co. of New York in a booklet under the title "The Message of the Modern Minister," and widely distributed in my church. So the members of my church fully knew what my convictions were before they accepted me. But they never told me what theirs were. The transaction was not honest. I know now that certain leaders of the church radically disagreed with my views. If so, why did they not say so, before the relationship was established? No doubt they assumed that I did not mean

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

what I said, and that I should be a conventional minister, compromising my convictions for the sake of peace.

The difficulty is that I thought it was right for a Christian minister to be honest and mean what he said. So after I had completed two large building enterprises, I began to put into practice the principles I had expressed in my inaugural statement. Then my trouble with the officers began. In order to be perfectly fair, I ought to say that while all I tried to put into practice was clearly stated in my inaugural address, which was printed and in the people's hands, yet in the process of their application I made what was nothing short of a fresh discovery of the Four Gospels. I admit that if I had not discovered the New Testament, or if I had kept the discovery a secret, I might have escaped trouble in my church and still have retained my position.

But this leads us to the very point at issue. Is there no room for intellectual and spiritual growth in the church? It is obvious that a young minister fresh from the schools, who has had little opportunity to do independent thinking or to verify his conclusions by experience, will have much to learn and ought to be expected to grow. In view of this obvious fact, would it not be the wise and natural thing for a church to say to its minister something like this: "You are a spe-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

cialist in the religious life; you make a special study of the Bible and are engaged to investigate the relation of spiritual principles to human needs; it must be that in the course of your study and experience, you will discover many new facts in the Bible and enjoy many new visions of spiritual truth helpful to human life; we want you not only to feel free to bring your discoveries to us in the pulpit, but we think it is your duty to do so; we will not, of course, promise to agree with all your conclusions, but we want you to share them with us, so that we can enjoy them with you, and grow as you grow." If any church should make a sincere attempt to discover what the truth is rather than to defend only the amount and kind of truth it is willing to accept, it would naturally make this statement to every minister it called. If any church would say this to its minister, it would get from him twice as much information and inspiration as it now receives, and which he is eager to give, but does not feel free to give. This is the deepest sorrow of the minister's life, that as a public teacher he has a wealth of good things to give which his church is not willing to receive. On the part of the church it is amazing to me that business men will invest so much money in it, and be content with so little return from it as they now receive. I have never known but one church to grant such freedom to its

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

minister. On the contrary, it is the common practice for the churches to put every obstacle in the way of the minister's freedom. This is sufficient reason for the profoundly disturbing fact that so large a number of young men and so large a number of the right type of young men are to-day refusing to enter the Christian ministry. No self-respecting young man wants to sacrifice his moral integrity and intellectual honesty for the sake of serving his fellow men inside the church when he can do it in so many better ways outside and still retain his moral manhood.

This also is the sufficient explanation of the confused lack of knowledge and of spiritual enthusiasm among the laymen of the church. I shall never forget a little experience which made this fact impressive to me. After I had decided to give up my church, but before I had left it, the committee in charge of the Princeton work in Peking, China, invited me to give a course of lectures in Peking and Tokio, on the essentials of the Christian religion, and put them into book form for the use of Chinese students. While I was formulating the line of thought the lectures ought to take, I asked a group of about twenty men to spend several evenings with me in conference on the subject. They were men from several different churches as well as my own. They were all leading business men of New York

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

City, editors of magazines, publishers of books, men of large affairs, and men of a very high order of intelligence. I stated the subject of the conference and said: "It's a long way to Peking, and the man who takes the time and money necessary to go there ought to feel that he has something to say which he deems very important indeed for his fellow men to know. You men have all been members of the church for many years. You represent as high an average of thoughtful laymen as can be found in America. It would be both interesting and helpful to me if you would tell me frankly what you think the Christian religion is about, what it aims to do and how it proposes to do it, what are some of its essentials which you think I ought to tell the Chinese students who sincerely desire to know about them." I did nothing but help guide and clarify the discussion by asking questions. I wish now I had arranged for a shorthand report of these meetings. It would be most interesting as well as very disturbing. I was surprised and shocked by the discussion. The one abiding impression made on me was the confusion of thought exhibited and the utter lack of any clear understanding of the meaning of the Christian religion. I felt that the Christian men of America needed a series of lectures almost as much as the non-Christian students of China. There was only one man in this group who had

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

any clear idea, or at least was willing to express what he thought the Christian religion was about. He had been a superintendent of a Presbyterian Sunday-school, then a member of a Congregational church, and is now a leader in the Unitarian Church. Moreover, he resigned a fine business position because he believed the methods of the business world were morally wrong. Thus he had thought his own way through to definite convictions, had suffered on their behalf, and hence was enthusiastic over them. To him the Christian religion is a definite and inspiring reality. I have many times since tried to explain to myself the confusion of thought on the part of these intelligent men. I have concluded that one of the chief reasons for it is the fact that they have received no clear instruction from the pulpit. The reason why they have not is because ministers are not free to give it, even if they were able to do so.

The above experiences are sufficient to indicate that intellectual dishonesty is one of the chief blights which to-day is disintegrating the church's moral integrity, preventing its spiritual growth, and undermining its influence with self-respecting men. What is the way out of this intolerable condition? The first step in the way out seems to me to be obvious. It is for the church to banish every dogmatic creed of whatever sort. A dogmatic creed is morally vicious

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

in its influence on intellectual integrity and spiritual growth. It padlocks the minister's mind. The Christian religion is not a dogmatic but a factual religion. The inductive method of examining the facts and of drawing one's own conclusions is the only method any man can honestly use, unless he deliberately abdicates his right to intellectual freedom.

If the jury's verdict is quite fixed and determined before the case is examined, what's the use of trying the case at all? "It is not so much," says Bertrand Russell, "that the creed of the church is a wrong one; what is amiss is the mere existence of a creed. As soon as income, position, and power are dependent upon acceptance of no matter what creed, intellectual honesty is imperiled. Men will tell themselves that a formal assent is justified by the good which it will enable them to do. They fail to realize that in those whose mental life has any vigor, loss of complete intellectual integrity puts an end to the power of doing good, by producing gradually in all directions an inability to see truth simply."

When I say that I think the church ought to have no dogmatic creed at all, I do not mean that it ought to have no convictions. I mean just the contrary. The complaint I make against the church is that it has no courage, no conscience, and no convictions. What I am

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

pleading for is that the church substitute convictions for dogmas, that it adopt a working programme, make a declaration of principles in which it can really believe, acquire some vital beliefs which it can get enthusiastic about and make them a requirement of membership. It is the church's unbelief and doubt concerning the Christian religion which is the fruitful source of its weakness to-day.

My own church, for example, had no such statement of principles and was not willing to make any such statement. I once wrote for my church a manual containing a short history of the church, of its departments of work, and general information concerning its operations. The manual was to be put into the hands of new members for their guidance. I urged the committee, appointed to have charge of this publication, to allow me to include in it a statement of the church's religious convictions. Years before, the church had adopted a "Confession of Faith," but it had become a dead letter. No member was asked to accept it. I asked the committee to make a new and vital one; not only because honesty required it, but because many in the community did not know what the church's position was and refused to join it on that account. When the people asked me for a statement of the church's beliefs, I had none to give them. They said, "We know from

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

your sermons what your convictions are and agree with them, but the church is run by a small group, whose position is quite different." Their request to know what the church stood for was entirely honest, and I admired them for refusing to join it under these conditions. In spite of these facts the committee voted to retain the old Confession, but attached to it a footnote, saying that no member of the church was asked to accept it. That is, they publicly acknowledged it to be a corpse, and yet they printed it. The old was dead and the new was powerless to be born. Why retain a corpse?

The reason is that the men who do so, while they know the people will not accept it, yet wish to dominate the church through the influence of dead dogma. These men, at least some of them, no doubt still sincerely believe in it. The point I raise is not the question of their personal beliefs, their merit or demerit, but the intellectual dishonesty of the method employed. The church is so anxious for members and money, that it is willing to be practically disloyal to the creed which it officially professes. It is the method of Jesuitism. If there is one document which the religious leaders of the church need especially to read and ponder, it is Carlyle's essay on "Jesuitism," in which he shows the untold damage it has done to the moral and spiritual life of the church. I can

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

admire any church which openly stands by its convictions, however widely they differ from my own, but I have no respect for a church which is not honest enough to say what its real convictions are.

The moral cowardice and intellectual dishonesty of my own church, which this experience reveals, is typical of churches in general. The Presbyterian church, for example, officially holds a well-known dogmatic creed, but it does not require any one of its members to accept it. Any man will be accepted by a Presbyterian church, even if he rejects nine tenths of the Westminster Confession. Only its ministers are required to accept it. It is quite apart from the mark for men to attempt to justify this action, as some of them do, by saying that ministers and not laymen are required to accept it, just as the President of the United States, because he is a public officer, takes an oath of allegiance to the Constitution, but a private citizen does not. The difficulty with this statement is that it is not true. The oath a man takes when he becomes President is an oath that he will be loyal, not to the Constitution, but to the *administration* of his office. Every citizen is expected to believe in the Constitution and obey it just as much as the President is. If any man violates it, something happens. Every alien, before he becomes a citizen, takes

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

an oath of allegiance to the Constitution. What impression would he get if we said, "This is the Constitution of our country which states our principles, but you can become a citizen whether you believe in it or not." Yet this is exactly what the church says — "This is the creed of our church, but we do not require any member to accept it."

I hold that no church can be honest which professes a creed it is unwilling to operate. A creed which we have so little faith in as to be afraid to submit it to the people for their acceptance or rejection is not worthy of respect. This procedure violates every principle of democracy. It is the survival of an autocratic method by which a few men attempt by subterfuge to dominate the church, by imposing their dogmas on the people. The church of the future, to be effective and morally useful, must first of all be intellectually honest.

If, then, a Christian church should be honest enough to abandon a dogmatic creed in which it no longer believed, and should adopt in its stead a declaration of principles as a working programme, I think it would be made up of a few simple axioms. Most dogmatic creeds deal largely with matters about which we know nothing and about which it is impossible for us to know anything, and are of very little importance, even if they could be known. But an

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

axiom is a self-evident truth which does not admit of argument. It is like this: William J. Bryan once began a lecture with this statement, "If you say to a man, 'Thou shalt not steal,' and he answers, 'I am not so sure about that; I would like to argue that proposition with you,' don't argue with him, search him." When the application of an axiom becomes morally disturbing, men find it more comfortable to take to argument and creed-making. "We are so accustomed," said Trevelyan, "to look for creeds, for short cuts to contentment by some other route than our own conduct and courage, that we will not believe that a man can teach us to live healthy lives, unless he has some patent medicine in his pocket." This explains why dogma and patent medicine are popular with those who want results without any effort on their part. Men stop trying to get something for nothing, just in proportion as they become moral and intelligent.

The axioms of the spiritual life are *formative* principles of both thought and conduct. It is like this — these axioms are to theology what the stars are to astronomy. They are the solid reliable facts. However important theology and astronomy may be — and they are important — nevertheless they necessarily consist in changing theories and widely differing opinions. When these opinions reach the stage when they can

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

be formulated in a creed, they are already dead. My point is that they ought never to be included in a church's declaration of principles, for they are not axioms but theories. By deserting the solid moral realities of experience for the fictions and theories of an irreverent imagination, it was a perfectly natural consequence that the church should have persecuted Galileo for expressing the new idea that the earth moved round the sun. From the time when Christianity was captured by Greek theological speculation until now, the church has always so acted. It is doing the same thing to-day in some form or another. It will continue to do so until it breaks the crust which impedes its progress, and officially abandons a dogmatic creed altogether, as a sin against moral and spiritual growth. The essence of religion is not a creed, but an attitude to life.

If I were asked to name some of the axioms that ought to constitute a worthy declaration of principles for a church, and express for it the Christian attitude to life, I think the statement ought to read somewhat as follows:

“The First Community Church of.....  
recognizes religion as a universal human fact, as an attitude to life instead of a dogma, as the basic common denominator among men, and as an indispensable common need like love and sunshine. It aims to unite all citizens of this

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

community for mutual aid in self-development through the discovery and practice of universal spiritual ideals as embodied in the real religion of Jesus and other teachers. It imposes on its members no confession of faith, but stimulates them to form their own personal and carefully considered convictions through untrammeled investigation and public discussion. It sets for itself the task of creating a social order more in harmony with the manifest purposes of God and with the conscience and intelligence of the people. It regards the community as the field of its labor and itself as a society of friends to be used as a force for the common welfare. It treats religion not as a separate business set up apart from life, but as a divine spirit pervading every activity of life. Its message is a challenge, not a truce; its ultimate authority in religion is the Inner Light; its only sanction in religion is the universal conscience; its working motto is each for all and all for each.'

It will be noticed that the formative idea on which this declaration is written is that, aside from the essential axioms, entire freedom is granted for each man to form his own conclusions. For example, the only requirement Jesus ever made of the first men who joined his company was, "Follow me." Personal practical loyalty admitted them to membership. Beyond that, all other questions were left for each man

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

to consider and settle for himself. For example, whether Jesus was divine or not, in what sense He was divine, whether his divinity rests on physical facts or on his moral and spiritual character — all questions of this kind are left for each man's honest consideration. It is like this: The most popular poem on the spiritual life ever written is the Hebrew hymn "The Lord is My Shepherd." It contains no word concerning theories of the shepherd's claims as to his position in the order of being. Aside from its artistic merit, the secret of its popularity lies in its use of the word "My." In this short poem of only six sentences, the personal pronoun occurs seventeen times. Until a man can spell the word "My" with a capital "M," he does not hold the key to its meaning. Speculative theories about the shepherd will lead him astray and may do him serious damage. Personally experienced loyalty, with its consequent effect on character and conduct, is the subject of the poem. Jesus had enough faith in himself and in his teaching to believe that, if an honest normal man came into intimate contact with his person and teaching, he would naturally fall in love with both, and enlist in his cause. He believed that only volunteers were of any value to his cause. He did not believe in drafting men through the compulsion of dogma or money or the sword. It is a vastly different thing for a

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

man to hold the abstract philosophical opinion that God, as a theological entity, is Jesus, than for him to act on the conviction that Jesus is his God; that is, the supreme director of his thought and conduct. Without practical loyalty, all theological speculative opinions are an impertinence not only, but a positive damage to the moral character. It is only a natural consequence that they have produced in the churches some very unattractive types of character, whose prevailing northeastern exposures have kept so many good men out of them. Blessed are the pious people with whom it is pleasant to live.

In addition to the above declaration of principles, such as Jesus made the condition for membership among his followers, I think the church's working platform<sup>1</sup> ought to include the Ten Commandments as a statement of its spiritual and moral standards, and also the Beatitudes as the statement of its spiritual and moral ideals. It might be disturbing, but would it not be refreshing and inspiring to see some church embody the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes in its working platform? The Beatitudes constitute Jesus' statement of his own working programme; are they not good enough for his church? Is it not surprising that no church has

<sup>1</sup> A suggested constitution for a community church will be found in Appendix C.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ever included in its creed the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes? The reason for this omission is, of course, not far to seek. They are too elevated and too disturbing to self-interest. It is so much easier and also safer to debate questions like the virgin birth, the immaculate conception, predestination, theories of the Trinity, future punishment of infants, Apostolic succession, modes of baptism,—questions which Jesus himself never once talked about,—than it is to consider ways and means by which the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes can be put into effective operation.

And yet, to put Jesus' teaching into operation is the avowed end and aim of the church. I am fully persuaded that one of the indispensable conditions of making any real progress toward fulfilling its professed mission is for the church to acquire intellectual freedom. To make this necessity apparent is the purpose of this chapter. I have tried to show from experience that even a church like my own, which is very much more forward-looking than the average church, has not yet acquired such freedom.

When a man has reached the radical conclusion that he will be honest with himself, as I have, and when he has discovered the spiritual and practical value of a sane and wise freedom, as I have, he feels a sense of shame in discussing the question as to whether the church ought to

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

permit its teachers and members to exercise intellectual freedom. It is so axiomatic. It does not admit of argument. It is so obviously essential to mental health and moral integrity that it seems unthinkable that any Christian church would refuse to foster its growth.

But the average church to-day neither permits it nor fosters it. By so doing the church is violating the first principle of all spiritual progress and every other kind of progress as well. An open mind is the gateway to truth and freedom. It is so indispensable that every one of the world's great teachers has dwelt on it with reiterated emphasis. Confucius called it by the beautiful name, "Mental hospitality." He dwells on it repeatedly. "The superior man," he said, "does not set his mind either for anything or against anything; what is right, he will follow." Socrates clearly saw the same need. He called open-mindedness "a love of wisdom." "I am not a sophist, a wise man," he said, as many in Athens professed to be. "I am a lover of wisdom." Out of this remark the term "philosopher" was born, for literally this is what the term means: "I am a lover of wisdom," a searcher after the truth.

What Confucius and Socrates saw so clearly, Jesus saw even more clearly; at least He stated it more vigorously, even drastically. I wonder why? Was it because He felt that men suffered

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

more from shut-mindedness in religious matters than in any other line of activity? His experience with the Pharisees of his day justified him in thinking so. He called mental honesty "The Spirit of Truth." He regarded it as so important that He called it a holy and divine spirit. He went so far as to say that a closed mind was an *unpardonable* sin. All my life I have heard religious people talk about "the unpardonable sin," but I never met any one who could tell me definitely what it was, although the church had often used it as a means of scaring people, and great numbers of women have been driven insane by it. One day I got an impulse to see whether Jesus Himself said what it was, for I had already begun to see that the Four Gospels throw a flood of light on theology. I turned to the passage in which He treats it. I was thrilled to discover that He makes it as clear as the sunshine, at least so it seems to me. 'I have many things to say unto you,' He said to his disciples, 'but you cannot receive them now, but when the spirit of truth takes possession of your minds and hearts he will guide you into all truth, one new truth after another and so help you to grow spiritually. You may say any ugly thing against me and it will be forgiven, but if you shut your minds against the spirit of truth itself, that cannot be forgiven.' That is to say, the unpardonable sin is nothing more or less than a closed

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

mind. It is a sin against the law of life. It prevents all growth. It is unpardonable for the very obvious reason that a man who deliberately refuses to grow, does n't grow. In order to make this fact still more clear, I will state it in the form of a parable, by quoting a descriptive poem by Charlotte Perkins Stetson, called "The Butterfly," which seems to me to embody exactly what Jesus meant by a closed mind and the damage it does to growth and progress.

"The garden bed I wandered by  
One bright and cheerful morn,  
When I found a new-fledged butterfly  
A-sitting on a thorn,  
A black and crimson butterfly  
All doleful and forlorn.

"I thought that life could have no sting  
To infant butterflies.  
So I gazed on this unhappy thing  
With wonder and surprise,  
While sadly with his waving wing  
He wiped his weeping eyes.

"Said I, 'What can the matter be?  
Why weepest thou so sore  
With garden fair and sunlight free  
And flowers in goodly store?'  
But he only turned away from me  
And burst into a roar.

"Cried he, 'My legs are thin and few  
Where once I had a swarm,  
Soft fuzzy fur a joy to view  
Once kept my body warm,  
Before these flapping wing things grew  
To hamper and deform.'

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

“At that outrageous bug I shot  
The fury of mine eye.  
Said I, in scorn all burning hot,  
In rage and anger high,  
‘You ignominious idiot  
Those wings are made to fly.’

“I do not want to fly,’ said he  
‘I only want to squirm.’  
And he dropped his wings dejectedly  
But still his voice was firm;  
‘I do not want to be a fly  
I want to be a worm.’

“O yesterday of unknown lack,  
To-day of unknown bliss;  
I left my fool in red and black:  
The last I saw was this,  
The creature madly climbing back  
Into his chrysalis.”

If we had the courage to be honest we should be compelled to say that the church through its intellectual dishonesty is committing the unpardonable sin. This explains its lack of spiritual growth. It also explains why the church to-day is losing its influence over a rapidly increasing number of good and honest men both in Europe and America. One of the first essential reforms which needs to be made in the church is to help it achieve intellectual honesty, to liberate it from dead chrysalis creedal forms, so that it may use its wings to fly into the free air and sunshine of a vital and joyous experience. Until this is done, we are only playing about

## INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

the fringes of the church's problem, which every day grows more acute. But if the large majority of the members of my own church were open-minded and desired to escape from their chrysalis forms, as I found them to be through the experience narrated in this chapter, and if the great body of the people in other churches honestly desire to know the way out of the church's present difficulty, why should such a reform be difficult to effect? The reason why I could not achieve this reform in my own church and the reason why I think it is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve, as the church is at present organized, is the subject of the next chapter.



### **III**

## **THE CHURCH AND FINANCIAL FREEDOM**

*When an institution is young it possesses abounding vitality, it has hope and faith, it is more or less oblivious to material expression or to material comfort. But when the institution grows old and fearful, begins to lose its confident hold upon life, instinctively it seeks to replace its failing vigor with material proofs of its greatness and power. As the spirit dies down, stone buildings rise up.*

RAY STANNARD BAKER

### III

#### THE CHURCH AND FINANCIAL FREEDOM

If the majority of church members were asked the question, "What one subject did Jesus talk about more than any other, as indicated by his private and public teaching reported in the only record we have of it, that is, the four biographies of the New Testament?" — what would they say it was? If they based their answer not on a careful examination of these records, but on the impression that lies in their minds and which they have received from the pulpit of the church, what would their answer be? For our present purpose this is the kind of answer we need. And it is a fair method of procedure, because we ought to be able to assume that a Christian minister would naturally emphasize most in his preaching the thing which Jesus emphasized most; otherwise he would give a false impression of his Master's teaching. In order to make this test, I suggest that my readers stop at this point in their reading, and formulate their own answers to this question.

If you do so, I venture to say that your

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

answers will be along this line — “The sermons we have heard lead us to think that Jesus as a religious teacher must have talked most about such subjects as sin and guilt and belief and future punishment.” If this is your answer, you will be no little shocked to turn to the New Testament and discover for yourself that He does nothing of the kind. What He talks most about is the *use and misuse of money*, the insidious blight which money brings to every thing that makes life worth while, when it becomes a master rather than a servant of man. He makes this clear by his deeds, as in the case of the money traffickers in the church of his day; by pointed parables, as in those about Dives and the Prodigal Son; by private conversation, as that with the rich young ruler; and by frequent direct teaching. My experience with life in general, and particularly my experience with the church, convinces me that Jesus’ convictions concerning money are entirely correct and are justified by obvious facts. I agree with him that an ethical view of money, with all that this view implies, is the profoundest need of our world both from a religious as well as from a social and economic point of view. Why is it that we get one impression from the records of Jesus’ teaching and a very contrary impression from the pulpits of churches to-day? There’s a reason. When I had discovered for myself that

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Jesus stressed the use of money most in his teaching, and announced a sermon on it for the following Sunday, I received a telephone message on Saturday evening from one of my officers begging me not to preach the sermon, because it would disturb a certain group of men in the church. The church's great problem is not the problem of poverty, but the problem of wealth, of dishonest privilege, and the injustice which always accompanies special privilege.

In the preceding chapter of this story, I tried to show that the church does not possess intellectual freedom. The reason why it does not, is because it does not possess financial freedom. The one is fundamentally dependent on the other. Slavery to money means slavery to dogma. It is the foster-father of moral cowardice. How completely intellectual freedom depends on financial freedom can be made apparent by describing a personal experience. One Sunday I preached a sermon on "The Religion of the Deed." It was the simplest application of Christian teaching to present human needs. In the course of the sermon I used, as an illustration, a prayer which was at that time being offered daily by girls employed by a factory in Cleveland, Ohio, but who were on a strike. It seemed to me that the prayer naturally would have wrung a cry of sympathy from a heart of stone. One petition of it, for

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

example, is as follows: "O Lord, who knowest the sparrow's fall, won't you help us to resist when the modern devil, who has charge of our work, takes advantage of our poverty to lead us astray? Sometimes, O Lord, it is hard. Hunger and cold are terrible things, and they make us weak. We want to do right. Help us to be strong."

After the service was over, one man, who at that time was president of our board of trustees, and who was a large part-owner of woolen mills in New England, remained for a private interview. He said he remained to register his protest against the sermon. He regarded it as wrong in fact, and harmful in influence, and he wanted me to know how he felt about it. I answered that, if he would sit down for a few minutes, I would guarantee to prove to him that he agreed with every principle stated in the sermon, provided he accepted the teaching of the New Testament, and that if I did not prove it, I would promise to buy him a new hat. He then said that he did not want to listen to any discussion of the subject, for he did not want to have his religion mixed with his economics. I answered that, of course, if his mind was closed on the subject, it would not be worth while to waste his time and mine in discussing it. With this remark the interview ended.

The next night this man attended a meeting

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

of the board of trustees and vigorously denounced the sermon, saying that it was dangerous preaching and vicious doctrine, that it would do great damage to the church *and also decrease the income of the trustees.* It will be noticed that he made no argument of the question itself,— just contenting himself with the use of such words as “dangerous,” and at the last he skillfully laid his finger on the sensitive and efficient secret of influence with the other members of the board, by saying, “it would decrease the income of the trustees,” thus implying that he would withdraw his own contribution.

By this time my interest was thoroughly aroused. I knew this man very well and I had a high regard for his ability. But I felt that he was not true to himself. I was so sure that he agreed with the principles of the sermon that I took steps to find out. The next Sunday I laid a trap for him into which he fell. It is contrary to my habit to address a sermon to any particular individual, but I wanted to discover a fact, which I deemed of great value for the guidance of the church as a whole. The next Sunday I gave an exposition of exactly the same principles treated by the sermon of the previous Sunday, to which he had so strenuously objected. But this time the setting for them was laid in a situation many centuries old, and they

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

were applied to Jeroboam, King of Israel. I soundly berated this ancient king for violating these very principles. I purposely made my invective against him most severe, in order to make the test more conclusive. The following day I received from this gentleman a long three-page typewritten letter, sent from his office in New York, in which he enthusiastically praised the sermon on Jeroboam. He dwelt on its merits in detail and covered them with extravagant compliments. He said this is the kind of preaching our church needs, and he urged me to continue it.

This, of course, is highly interesting comedy, but it is tragedy also. The experiment disclosed, what I had suspected, that it is not to the Christian principles that men of this type object. What they object to is their application. It is typical of those church officials who are always expressing their anxious devotion for the "simple Gospel," by which is meant a plan to insure a man's escape from punishment in the next world, but which "tactfully" avoids any serious application of the principles of Jesus to the moral and social needs of human life in this present world. My experiment discloses the further fact that the opposition of these men to intellectual honesty on the part of the minister in treating Christian principles, inspired as it is by selfish motives, leads them to use un-

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

worthy and autocratic methods to gain their ends. They refuse to enter into any open discussion on the merits of the question at issue; they merely withdraw their financial support. To add this "practical" argument to personal abuse is the efficient way to produce results.

This episode is significant of much. It leads us at once into the secret of the church's moral weakness and lack of success as an institution. One of the chief keys to a true understanding of both the moral and material weakness of the church lies in its board of trustees. During the twenty years of my ministry, the board of trustees has been by far the most troublesome factor with which I have had to deal. It is the storm center in the work of the church. The amount of my time and strength consumed in trying to prevent injury to the church through the blunders of the trustees, or in undoing the injury they had already done to it, I should be ashamed to state. I am not unmindful of the many noble trustees in both my churches, who have rendered most faithful and efficient service. I am speaking of the system itself. The Protestant church is the most lamely managed of all modern institutions. The two fundamental weaknesses which have resulted from the organization of trustees as a separate board are practical inefficiency in the work of the church, and

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

moral damage to its spiritual influence. I realize that these are both drastic indictments to make, but my experience of twenty years convinces me that they are not only true, but obviously true. To make them apparent I will state the facts of my experience which led me to these conclusions, facts which at the same time will point the clear way out of the difficulty. For the sake of the fundamental principle involved, I shall be compelled to be more personal than my sense of good taste would ordinarily permit me to be.

When I took charge of my Pennsylvania church I knew very little about the administration side of my work. The Theological Seminary does not seem to regard it as any part of its duty to equip a minister for his practical work. Its aim is to make scholars. For the first five years my church had a yearly deficit in its income. Each year I was asked to raise it by making an appeal from the pulpit, which I did. Then I refused to do it any longer. I took this stand because it was unfair to ask those in the congregation, who had already done their share, to make up a deficit which was due to a lack of business methods. I did it also out of justice to myself. Whenever any church does not succeed financially, the minister gets the blame for it, whether he is responsible for it or not. But the law of the church does not permit him to be a

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

member of the board of trustees or have any connection with its finances. To hold a minister responsible for the results of poor business methods, in which he is permitted to have no part, is manifest injustice. No business man would consent to take charge of any concern and be responsible for producing results, unless he was also given some degree of freedom in the management of it. Where there is no freedom, there can be no responsibility. And yet almost all churches are so organized as to violate this simple moral principle.

Instead, therefore, of raising the yearly deficit from the pulpit as the trustees had asked me to do, I asked to be made chairman of a committee of trustees to manage the church finances for one year. It was a violation of the church law for me to do so, but for the good of the church it was important that I find out the real cause of its financial condition. This was a month before the church's fiscal year began. In two weeks we had received subscriptions enough to pay that year's deficit and more than enough to provide for the following year's budget. It was seventeen hundred dollars in excess of the church's income for any previous year. The methods used were the simplest methods of ordinary scientific management adapted to church needs. To make the test more accurate, the name of the trustees and

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

not my own name was signed to all communications so that my personal influence might not be a factor in the result.

Then I made my first discovery about church finances, which it took me five years to make and the truth of which, since then, has been abundantly confirmed. It is this: that the average church trustee does not know how to conduct church finances, neither the methods to be employed nor the spirit in which to employ them. I do not blame him for not knowing. It is unnatural to expect him to know. If I desired to know about insurance, I should go to a man who had made a life study of it. If I desired to learn how to publish a magazine, I should consult a man who was engaged in that business. Likewise, if I wanted to know how to administer a church, it is natural to consult the man who is devoting his entire time to this one pursuit, that is, the minister. If he does not know how to guide the institution of which he is the head, then he ought not to be in that position. The test of democracy both in and out of the church is its willingness to trust a leader. A boss is intolerable; a leader is indispensable. I do not blame the trustees for not knowing; I blame them for their unwillingness to learn from a man who does know. The average trustee does not know that the driving methods he uses in his factory or business, in

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

which he has the power to discharge any employee who does not carry out his plans, when employed with several hundred people in a voluntary organization like the church, will not only not work, but will do actual damage. His trouble is that he forgets human nature. The situation is quite different from that to which he is accustomed in his business.

Acting on this discovery, I thought at that time that all the church needed to do in order to solve its financial problems was to perfect its business methods. Then for several years I entered with real zest into the work of performing this task. I invented and had patented a double pocket or duplex envelope, so that both the church support and benevolences could be provided for at one stroke and neither would suffer on account of the other. I made a series of letter forms to be used for different groups of church adherents; I devised a card ledger, quarterly statements, and all other devices that a good business house would naturally use. The whole plan was based on simple democratic and scientific principles. I then wrote a long booklet, called "The Individual System of Church Support," describing in detail the method to be used, explaining the principle on which it is based, and demonstrating from experience the larger results it would produce. Five years later this method was taken up by the missionary

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

boards of the churches and is the method now earnestly urged on the churches of the country by the agencies and conventions of almost all the denominations.

I say all this for the sake of saying what I am now about to say. I say it to lend weight to my statement that it is my present conviction that the question of method is *not* the solution of the church's financial trouble. Of course, I still believe in the value of efficient methods, and I am glad to have been one of the pioneers in the field of scientific management for the church, and to have made a contribution to it, which is increasingly meeting with general acceptance; but I place far less value on it now than I once did and I regret that I expended so much of my time and thought upon it. For, after all, the question of method is only a detail, however important a detail it may be. It seems now somewhat pathetic to me to notice that so many religious leaders are offering to churches a more efficient method of raising funds as a solution of the church's financial difficulties, as a check to the church's declining influence with the people, and as the remedy for the failure to give adequate support to its missionary enterprises. It is like trying to defend the outposts when the citadel itself is in danger. It cannot prevent ultimate defeat. The church can never be saved by improving a detail. The remedy must go

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

deeper, because the disease is far more fundamental.

What the heart of the difficulty is, will be made clear, I think, by the following experience. When I took charge of my New Jersey church, I found that the methods of conducting its finances were so bad that if a bank or any commercial concern employed them it could not continue in business for six months. The methods used not only produced a big yearly deficit, which seriously disturbed other departments of church work, but they constantly drove people out of the church so that the deficit naturally grew bigger. I said nothing about it for a year. Then the condition became so bad that the trustees themselves asked for my help. I did not tell them that their methods were the worst I had ever seen, but I took the more gentle way of coöperating with them and showing them a better way. The result was that this was the first year in its history when the church did not have a deficit. Moreover,—and this is still more important,—the result was achieved without any appeal from the pulpit and without hurting any one's feelings or driving him from the church. The question of money was relegated from the foreground to the background of the church's thought. Thinking that one year's demonstration ought to be sufficient, I withdrew from all connection with the trustees, but that

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

year the old deficit returned. It amounted to \$600. This deficit, coupled with their failure to provide for the next year's budget, led the trustees to ask my assistance again. By our coöperation and the use of the newer methods, whose two chief characteristics were their business efficiency and their democratic spirit, the budget for the following year was not only easily raised, but a sufficient surplus to pay the previous year's deficit as well, and all without any public appeals. .

Then a puzzling thing happened. In the face of these facts and without the courtesy of one word to me about it, the trustees deliberately threw into the waste-basket the plan, whose success had been twice demonstrated in their own experience, and adopted the old plan which they knew to have been a failure during the church's entire previous history, with the result that the deficit that year was \$1500. Then, instead of having the honesty and manliness to accept responsibility for their blunder, they went to the extreme limit of trying to sever the relation between the minister and the church.

Then I made my second discovery about the church's relation to money. I was reluctantly forced to a conclusion, which exposes such an ugly fact in the church's life that I tried every other explanation before accepting the true one. I thought at first that it could be explained by

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

the natural reluctance to accept anything new. I know the human mind has a marvelous capacity to resist the introduction of a new idea. An American engineer, who went to Mexico to assist in the construction of a new railroad, in the course of his work was engaged in directing some natives in the excavation of a cut. The method used by the natives was to carry the dirt in small buckets on their shoulders. The engineer was distressed by the slowness of the process, so he went to New York for a hundred wheelbarrows. He installed the new method carefully, explaining how to use wheelbarrows, and showed the natives how much more efficient this method would be. He had occasion to leave them for ten days to visit another part of the construction work, and on his return he found that all the wheelbarrows had been dumped into the scrap heap, and that the natives had returned to their old method of carrying the dirt in small buckets. The report does not narrate what language the engineer used when he discovered the reaction of these hopeless stand-patters.

This is exactly what my trustees had done. They are not ignorant Mexican laborers, however, but leading business men of New York City. I credit them with enough intelligence not to commit such a stupid blunder without having a real reason for it. I thought that they might be disturbed by the discovery that they, being

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

business men, could not successfully conduct the church finances. But I was not quite willing to believe that these gentlemen were so small, and so lacking in devotion to the welfare of the church, that they were unwilling to see it succeed unless the success came through them alone. Thus, by a process of elimination, I was forced to accept the only explanation which explains. It is this: A group of trustees for their own purposes want to dominate the teaching and policies of the church. The most efficient method of control is through money. For this reason it is necessary to keep the control of the finances in their own hands. This is the plain fact. After I had accepted this conclusion I saw that its truth was abundantly confirmed by other evidences. It has been the common custom of a group of my trustees not to subscribe what they could give to the church, as all the other people did, but only half what they expected to give. Then, when the expected deficit occurred, they made it up by special gifts. This gave the impression that the church was under special obligation to them as benefactors, whereas the truth is that their subscription and special gift together made an amount which at the least was five times less than what the average members gave in proportion to their ability. But the deficit is a convenient means of securing control over the church. These gentlemen were

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

commonly known in the community as "the big four."

At one time a group of these gentlemen withdrew their contributions to the extent of \$2000, in order to use money as a club to compel the church to yield to their wishes. So effective was this club that they were able to reentrench themselves at a church meeting, which called a new minister of their own choice, although only a trifle over ten per cent. of the resident members of the church would consent to attend it or have any part in it. The deciding factor, which determined the action, was not the desire of the people, but the power of money.

I heard one of these gentlemen at a meeting of the church officers bitterly resent a suggestion from one of his fellow officers, that it would be helpful to the church if he resigned as a trustee. The reason he frankly gave for his resentment was the fact that he had given large sums of money to the church, and hence had earned the right to occupy its offices and control its policies. This is typical of this class of men. They regard the church as a business corporation in which the man who holds the most stock has the most votes. It never has dawned on them that the church is a radically different kind of institution, in which the shares of stock do not consist of money, but of character and intelligence; that a commercial corporation is a private business for

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

private gain, but a church is a public enterprise for public service, in which the aim is to see, not how much a man can get for himself, but how much he can give to others.

Sometimes the people quietly show their resentment against these autocratic methods, by using the same kind of measures. They withhold their own contributions for which they are severely criticized by the men who themselves do the same thing. But the people reason that, if these men insist on dominating the church by means of money, then they ought to be willing to pay for the privilege. I see no flaw in this reasoning. Sometimes the people openly rebel, as I have seen them do on two occasions. Then these gentlemen try to win their way back into public favor by making large gifts, such as money for a new parsonage or a new organ. It's a futile game to play, for these men ought to know that the genuine respect of their fellows can be secured only through character and intelligence, never bought with money. The people publicly accept what they privately resent. It's also a harmful game for the church, for in this way many churches have burdened themselves with expensive plants. They are handicapped by architecture. By this process they sell still more of their freedom. They then discover that they cannot maintain the plant without relying on large gifts from the same few men. This is why

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

they cannot make a public stand for their convictions. The colleges are going through the same process. Whenever a church or college burdens itself with buildings for the support of which it must depend on large gifts from a few men, it forfeits its moral and spiritual freedom. If a church had the courage to dare to be poorer than it is and depend on the small gifts of the many, its influence for good would be immeasurably increased. It would then be free to stand for Christian ideals.

The plain fact is that the church as an institution has sold its soul for money. In Protestant churches, the sale is negotiated through the board of trustees. The price is too high. As a result of the sale, the church has lost its intellectual honesty and moral integrity, and consequently its influence to-day counts for nothing at all with large masses of people, and is counting less and less with an increasing number of honest men. Personally I have concluded that I can no longer be a party to this sale. The masses of the people outside the church have the impression that the church cannot take any stand for vital moral issues which concern their welfare, because it is dominated by financial interests. In order not to make any general unsupported statement, I have gone into considerable detail so that my statement might be based on actual facts from the inside, when I

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

say that I believe this impression on the part of the people is for the most part quite correct. The critical trouble with churches, as with the colleges, is the fact that most ministers in churches and professors in colleges are Pharisees. I say this with no desire to be unkind, but merely for the purpose of being accurate in my description. A Pharisee is a man who has made a complete divorce between his theory and his practice. This is his distinguishing characteristic. The reason why so many ministers and teachers have become Pharisees is because they have lost their freedom. They are not free men, because the institutions they serve are controlled by money. If they dared to connect their ideals with the practice of them they would lose their positions. If there be any who doubt it let them apply the acid test and try the experiment. It is idle for ministers to hope that they ever can become free men so long as churches are organized as they now are. The issue before the church seems to me to be obvious. It is the contest between democracy and plutocracy, between character and money. It is the same issue which obtains in the colleges, in politics, in industry. It is the issue which Jesus talked about more than any other. How can the church represent his teaching and be a leader in the cause of democracy, when it has already sold itself to the arch-enemy of this cause?

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

What is the way of escape out of the church's moral dilemma and betrayal of its own cause? If the citadel of the church's control by money is the board of trustees, as I have tried to demonstrate that it is, and the truth of which I have never heard questioned by any minister, then the first step in the way out is obvious. It is to destroy the citadel, to abolish the board of trustees as a separate board. This is not the only thing needed, but unless this is done, nothing else will be of much value. It is the first indispensable step in the process. Incorporate the church as a church and not as a business corporation. Put it in charge of one board of managers instead of two, as it is at present. Put the finances in charge, not of an independent board of trustees, but of a small sub-committee of the single board of managers, under whose direction they will operate and to whom they are responsible. This is the first step to take, if we would relegate money from the foreground to the background of the church's life, where it belongs.

This reform is a simple one to effect, and can easily be done by any church which wants to do it. The law of no state, so far as I know, needs to be amended in order to permit it. If it did, there would be no difficulty in securing it. Charters for corporations designed not for profit, such as churches, hospitals, and benevolent

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

or literary concerns, are granted by county courts and not by the commonwealth through the secretary of state, as other charters are. All that the law requires is that there shall be a local board of laymen, who shall act as trustees for the property. The law recognizes no other board. There is no reason, therefore, why a church could not elect the same board of men, who act as trustees, to have charge also of all its other activities, so that the one board of managers would act both as trustees and deacons and have charge both of its temporal and spiritual affairs. The law with respect to churches is intentionally framed so as to keep the control of church property in the hands of the lay members of local congregations and prevent undue ecclesiastical control over it by any religious denomination. This, of course, is highly important in a democratic form of government, which fears the influence of a powerful church over state affairs. But in avoiding undue ecclesiastical influence, the church has run squarely into the danger of undue financial influence. In running away from Scylla, it ran into Charybdis. The remedy is to unite the spiritual and temporal functions in the same board of managers and thus avoid the dangers of both influences.

If a normal man approached this question in a natural way, uninfluenced by custom, preju-

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

dice, or self-interest, he would never think of organizing a church in any other way. He would organize it for just what it is; that is, a church. The only explanation I ever heard for dividing the church into two separate compartments is that one is sacred and the other is secular. No doubt there are many who believe in this distinction, but my conviction is that it is wholly false, that it has no existence in fact, and is quite contrary to the teaching of Jesus. It is harmful as well as false. Indeed, I know of no other dogma which has done more injury to the Christian religion than this false distinction between the secular and sacred. I hope to make this clear in a later chapter of my story. The point I am here making is that this dogma has been a most useful ally to those gentlemen, who desire to control through the power of money the preaching and policy of the church. For their purpose it is essential that the people be led to believe that money is a very secular thing and ought to be left in the hands of business men to manage.

To merge the two boards of the church into one board of managers is sufficiently justified on the ground of efficiency alone. The two sides of church work are vitally connected and constitute one piece of goods. Neither can be done independently without damage to both. Church finances can never be conducted in a Chris-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

tian spirit, if they are treated as a question of finances alone. The minister is the only man who knows all the people and their circumstances. Without a knowledge of the human factors involved, the trustees cannot do their work without making foolish blunders and very often cruel blunders. The minister ought to be a regular member of the single board of managers. He ought never to be burdened with detail processes, but without his guidance the work cannot be properly done. It is just as useless and harmful for a church to have two separate controlling boards, as it would be for a bank to have two boards of directors. What would happen if two separate boards attempted to run the same bank is obvious enough. If two men are trying to ride the same horse at the same time, and each one is trying to ride in front, the peace and progress of their journey are sure to suffer injury. This is the chronic condition of the church. The loss of time, misunderstanding, and friction, which must result from the attempt of two separate groups of men trying to do the same piece of work, has always amazed me and made me wonder why intelligent people will stand for it. During the twenty years of my ministry, it has caused me more unnecessary trouble than any other single factor. It frequently spoils the spiritual tone of an entire church; it frequently causes a minister to leave his church

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

when he is doing the best kind of work, and it frequently does irreparable injury to his life-work.

But my chief objection to the separation of church officers into two independent boards is not its inefficiency — my chief objection to it is that it is morally wrong. It ceases to be a question of detail and becomes a fundamental moral issue. It has robbed the church of its intellectual honesty and moral integrity. By this means the church has put money above principle and sold its spiritual freedom. This is made evident by a simple, well-known fact. In the "free" churches, the rule of the church is that its board of trustees may be composed of men, from one fourth to one half of whom do not need to be members of the church; do not need to be Christian men at all; and may have little knowledge of the church's ideals or sympathy with them. Why is this done? Is it a plan by which the church can secure service from a group of outside poor men of exceptionally fine character, who for conscientious reasons are not church members? What an absurd suggestion! Oh, no, it is done so that the church can get money from a little group of rich men, who, in return for it, demand the right to control the church's policies and who usually exercise the right which the church itself has given them. These are the gentlemen who dictate to the minister what he must not preach.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

His tenure of office likewise depends on their personal wishes.

How completely they dominate the church can be seen by a very easy test which any church can apply to itself. Let us suppose that a group of three or four poor men in my New Jersey church, instead of a like number of rich trustees, had attempted to disturb my relationship to it. Of course, it is an impossible supposition, for the poor do not generally act this way, and I beg their pardon for suggesting it; but if we imagine that they did, can there be the slightest doubt what would have happened to them? They would have been driven from the church within a month. If the trustees, who did end my tenure of office, had relied for their power, not on money, but on their character and intelligence alone, their influence would have been a negligible quantity. The church has sold itself into bondage to money through its trustees.

I do not mean to suggest that some of these men outside the membership of the church are not good men. My experience convinces me that there are large numbers of these "outside saints," who are far better men than the pious deacons of the church. Indeed, it is these very men who object most to conditions existing in the church, and on account of which they refuse to join it. But I am speaking of the general rule, not of a few exceptions. The church has deliber-

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

ately surrendered the control of its own affairs into the hands of a small group of rich men both members and non-members. It is so eager for money that it is willing to go so far as to provide by its constitutional law that a large proportion of its trustees do not need to be Christians at all. In my New Jersey church the proportion is four out of nine. The chief qualification for the office is not character and intelligence, but the possession of money. But a church ceases to be Christian when it puts money above principle. A man who does not sufficiently represent the aims of the church, as to be regarded fit to manage its spiritual affairs, ought never to be permitted to manage its property affairs. In permitting it, the church stultifies itself.

The results of this sale are natural enough. The board of deacons, nominally the chief board, has been degraded to second place, and the trustees have been elevated to first place. The cart has been put before the horse: the tail is wagging the dog. The board of deacons has no freedom and no courage. In the whole eight years of my New Jersey pastorate, my deacons never inaugurated any piece of work unless they knew the trustees approved it, excepting once. And then, after this work had proceeded for two months, producing splendid results, the deacons squarely reversed themselves and stopped the work when the trustees demanded

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

it. When I went to my Pennsylvania church, the president of the board of trustees was a rich man, who was not a member of any church, and whose spirit was anything but Christian. He dominated the church with a high hand. He went to the extent on one occasion, by resigning, of attempting to bully the other officers over a ridiculously small matter. They had the good sense to accept the resignation. But it was only by a fortunate *accident* that the church escaped an influence that was blighting its moral life, and then only for a short period, because the same kind of influence has returned to dominate the church. The same condition I met in this church, I met in my New Jersey church, only on a larger scale and much more deeply entrenched.

The same is true of the great majority of churches. If any church happens to be an exception and this is not true of it to-day, it may be true of it to-morrow. For the church itself has opened the door wide for it to occur. The first step in the liberation of the church is to abolish the board of trustees as a separate board.

This is not the only thing to be done, as I hope to show in a later chapter of this story. No plan of reform will run itself unless it is running downhill. I realize that the reform I am proposing is a question of organization. Now, organization, of course, is not the main question

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

in any institution, but it is indispensable. It is obvious that the shell is not the egg. It is equally obvious that the shell is highly important, if we desire to handle eggs with any success or comfort. A government organized in the form of a democracy does not produce the spirit of democracy, but it makes democracy possible.

The church must first of all be organized democratically. It is the first essential step, not only to make democracy possible, but the point I am trying to make clear is that the church is to-day so organized as to insure its own defeat. The division of church officers into two boards is, therefore, not a question of detail in organization; it is the deliberate betrayal of a moral cause. By this plan the church permits a small group of men to subsidize it. Their chief desire is that the social order shall remain as it is. If the minister attempts to preach the Christian religion *according to Jesus*, the financial power of these men over the church is such that they can stop this gospel from being preached; or, if the minister's conscience does not permit him to misrepresent the Christian religion, they can drive him from his pulpit, whatever the people of the church may think or say. The kind of organization which permits a procedure like this is unfair both to the people and to the subsidizers. It brings a moral blight on the people; it brings an even worse moral

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

blight on the small group of men who are responsible for it. The church has sold its soul for money, and it is paying the price in moral debility, in the sacrifice of intellectual honesty, in the alienation of great masses of the class of people among whom Christianity first started, and also in the loss of respect on the part of educated men. Its only way out is to cancel the contract of sale. The first step in the process is to abolish the board of trustees as a separate board.

I fully realize that the reform I am proposing is a radical one. It is intended to be. The disease is so deep-seated and so dangerous that only an operation will save the patient. To re-organize the church, as a church, with one board of managers, would constitute the church's declaration of independence from the domination of money. Its declaration will not be accepted as sincere by the people unless it thus assumes the form of a deed. Such an act would at one stroke shear a group of trustees of their power to subsidize the church by money. This is only the beginning of the process of achieving its freedom, as we shall see, but its importance cannot be overstated, because it makes all additional steps possible.

The effect on the people of such a declaration of independence would be like this: A few years ago I was arranging to give a series of

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

lectures to my young men and women on the undiscovered teaching of Jesus concerning such subjects as — work, love, money, joy, democracy. My method of treatment was to give an exposition of a first-class constructive poem, which dealt with each of these subjects in a luminous and powerful way. I had no difficulty in finding such a poem for each of these subjects, excepting one. I could not find any poem on money. This at first surprised me, inasmuch as the desire for money is rather common. But I gave up my search for it, when it occurred to me that it was not possible to write such a poem on money, for money is not a real thing like work or love or courage; it is only a mechanical symbol. No constructive poem can ever be written on money until we acquire an ethical view of it; and even then the poem will not be on money, but on its proper use for something outside of itself. In making out the card of announcements for the lectures, I printed the subject and poem for each night, including money, but left a blank in place of the poem. I starred this blank with a footnote to this effect — “Poems on money glare by their absence.” The point I am making is, that in the past the domination of the church by money has so glared by its presence that it is of paramount importance now to make it glare by its absence. I know of no way to accomplish this

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

result except to abolish the board of trustees as an independent board and substitute for it a small subordinate committee of a board of managers, who will thus acquire the power to put first things first and second things second in the work of the church.

Undoubtedly, this reform will be strenuously opposed. Vested interests have never yet been known to give up their special privileges with any degree of cheerfulness. They will oppose it with every possible and impossible pretext, and in their opposition they will be aided and abetted by the pious and orthodox leaders of the church, just as they have always been in the past. Let no one think that the reform will be easy to accomplish. Certain gentlemen, finding no honest argument to defeat it, will, of course, withdraw their contributions rather than surrender their power to dictate the church's policies.

The process which I think will make the reform not only possible, but financially successful, is the subject of the next chapter.

## **IV**

### **THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM**

*A church ceases to be a church and becomes a sect just in so far as it lays down any qualification for membership, which excludes any one except by his own fault. It becomes a sect when it acquiesces in being the church of a social class, or the church of a specific temperament, or the church of a certain intellectual grade or character, or an organization to lay undue stress on some one idea to the destruction of the right perspective of Christian teaching.*

ROBERT ELLIS THOMPSON

## IV

### THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

DURING many years I have earnestly desired to be the minister of the kind of church which Abraham Lincoln could have joined. Lincoln was a sincere Christian and doubtless the most conspicuous ideal Christian in history, but he was not a member of any church, because he found no church of which he could conscientiously become a member. There is no mistaking the exact nature of his position. He did not fail to unite with a church because of indifference; he deliberately refused to join a church because of his convictions. He said, "Whenever any church will inscribe over its altar, as the qualification for its membership, the Saviour's statement of the substance of both law and gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and with all my soul." He never found any such church and therefore did not join any.

Would Lincoln find to-day in America any church which he could conscientiously join? I

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

doubt it. One of the reasons why he could not is the subject of this chapter. The two reasons, which he states in the words of Jesus, and which he distinctly says prevented him from joining any church in his day, are the limitation which churches place upon his intellect, and the limitation upon his neighborly feeling. To these two reasons, Lincoln would undoubtedly have added a third, if he were living to-day. He would add the limitation which the church places on a man's self-respect through its slavery to money. These are the three reasons which now compel me to leave the church: its dogmatism, its commercialism, and its sectarianism. The first two have been treated in previous chapters; the third is the subject of this one. What Lincoln saw by looking at the church from the outside, I have come to see after a long experience on the inside of the church.

It seems like a shocking thing to say, but I believe it is accurately true that Lincoln was too good a Christian to be a member of a sectarian church. A man of his large human sympathy could not endure the limitation which sectarianism places upon it. He believed that sectarianism is un-American, undemocratic, and un-Christian. The number of good men to-day who share Lincoln's feeling is large and rapidly growing. It is a highly significant fact that the problem, of which churches are now becoming

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

conscious, is not how to persuade bad men to join them, but how they can induce good men to join them. This fact compels us to inquire what ails the church, that good men, for conscientious reasons, feel they cannot join it. One of the chief reasons for this attitude on the part of good men, I believe, is the sectarianism of the church. They feel that denominationalism, which they have outgrown, is not only a serious handicap on the usefulness of Christian men, but is also a positive moral damage to human life. I agree with them.

I first became awakened to the real evils of sectarianism in my own experience through the practical limitations it put on my work as a minister of the church. I have always believed that, as a minister, my field of work was not the church, but the community and that the church was a force to be used in behalf of the community's welfare. When I looked over my field I noticed that there was no Young Men's Christian Association in the ward in which my church was located and that no work at all was being done for boys by anybody. I felt there was special need for such work, not only because of the requests for it, which came to me from individual mothers, but because of the nature of our community. It is an elegant suburb of New York. The boys are separated from normal human activities. The danger of a rich suburb

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

is that it develops the sensory type of boy, instead of the motor type. That is, he is a boy whose senses are largely developed. He comes to demand exciting pleasures. He is given in miniature many of the things which belong to adult life. He, therefore, becomes a man too soon; he becomes a small man. This process weakens his motor powers. He does not know how to use his will. He will sit in the grandstand, but he will not play ball himself. He wants to be operated upon, but he himself will not operate. He is the type of boy who, by and by, will shun the responsibilities of adult life. They are too heavy for him. He has not been accustomed to bear responsibilities. He has been accustomed to have things done for him. Educators in schools and colleges are becoming distressed over this type of boy. They are produced chiefly in the suburbs.

It was this real need which I set myself to meet. When, therefore, we began to enlarge our church plant for Sunday-school work, I was delighted to have the opportunity of receiving a gift of twelve thousand dollars for a special building to make possible this work with boys. I had our architect include the building in our other plans. It provided a workshop for manual-training activities, and also a swimming-pool. These two forms of work and play we could manage most economically in a small space.

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

We had in the community a young man who was a genius in electrical work. He was writing a series of books on wireless telegraphy and other apparatus. He offered to instruct the boys in working out the models and instruments which he needed for his books. I kept the special gift of money in the background, for unless I could persuade our men to undertake the work for its own sake, it would not be a success. I laid the scheme and the plans of the building before a group of men. On the night I did so, I received from a member of the church, who was absent in a Western city, a telegram saying that, if this work was undertaken, he would give one thousand dollars to it. I could easily have secured enough money for it aside from the special gift which had been tendered me for the whole enterprise. It was a rare opportunity. My disappointment may be imagined when my board of trustees voted to abandon the whole plan. This building for boys' work was accordingly eliminated from our plans and we proceeded with the other buildings. They took this action because, they said, they did not consider this work with boys the proper kind of work for a church to undertake.

This decision raised issues which profoundly affected my future conduct. Here was a vital and pressing human need in the community. I had the desire to meet it. I was equipped to

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

meet it. We had the money, and yet the trustees defeated it and then proceeded to build buildings which are used less than twenty-five per cent. of the time. It has an expensive auditorium used a trifle over one hour a week, and its other rooms are used only a little more. It pays its minister a large salary and then prevents him from earning it. This incident is typical of many more of the same kind. For example, my work with young people, which was my specialty, convinced me that one of our obvious duties to them is to equip them with certain facts of life, and a right attitude of mind to them, that they may be safeguarded from fatal dangers and be prepared for the high task of parenthood. This need so appealed to my heart that I started a movement to meet it, which I called "The New Chivalry." Before I made any attempt to treat it from the pulpit, two of my officers, fearing that I might, urged me not to do so, on the ground that it would disturb some in the congregation. It became clear that I should have to go outside of my church to do this piece of work, which I accordingly did. I started the movement in the State of New Jersey and I wrote a book for its use.

Thus, in one experience after another, I found my hands and feet tied in attempts to meet what seemed to me to be obvious needs of the community. It became apparent that, in order

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

to do any constructive work for the community or even to talk about it, it was necessary for me to go outside of the church. Therefore, in order to leave the church undisturbed I tried this policy. I permitted myself to be elected the president of the civic association of the town. I became active in this association, that I might help the community deal with such problems as child welfare, for a recent survey made by our Board of Health in coöperation with the Federal Children's Bureau revealed conditions in one of our wards which were most disturbing; with the question of education, for we were facing the necessity of building a new high school, the feeling over which became so aroused as to threaten to divide the town, not only geographically, but to do permanent harm to its community spirit; with the question of better housing, not only for the poor, but for our young men and women in general. On account of land speculation and false social pride, very many of our better class of young people, when they married, had to leave the town because they could not afford to live in it. Whenever the possession of money, rather than of character and intelligence, becomes a necessary qualification for residence in any town, that town is sowing the seeds of serious future trouble for itself. It was not only a poetic sentiment or a radical social opinion, but an unescapable moral law,

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

which Oliver Goldsmith expressed, when he said:

“Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.”

I had not been long at work on these and similar questions in the civic association, when the trustees of my church registered their protest against my having any connection at all with the civic association, and they did it in such a way as to make it apparent that serious trouble awaited me if I continued to do so. It became clear to me that my way was blocked for doing work for the community through the church, and that I was also prevented from doing it outside the church while I remained its minister. It is an impossible position for any man, who wants to be an honest teacher of the Four Gospels and loyal to the cause in which he has enlisted. I began to feel very much as did the little farmer boy to whom a stranger addressed this question, “Boy, how much do you get for all the hard work you are doing on this farm, from sunrise to sunset, day after day?” “Get, mister, get?” answered the boy. “Why, nothing if I do, and hell if I don’t.”

In this bemuddled situation I was comforted to notice that the more my church officers condemned my work for the community, the more the community itself appreciated and approved

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

it. This fact was at once gratifying and disturbing. For it compelled me to inquire of myself whether my proper place was not outside rather than inside the church, if I wanted to work for the Kingdom of God rather than for a private sectarian group. If questions like the welfare of children, providing homes for future families, and public education are not the proper questions with which a minister ought to busy himself, I felt that there must be something radically and morally wrong with the church's conception of the function of a Christian minister.

Shortly after this, the subject at the weekly prayer meetings was "The Church and the Community." I took occasion to say that it was my conviction that the church was not an end, but a means to an end; that I regarded the community as my field and the church as a force to be used in this field; that I conceived the essential function of the church to be missionary in spirit and function,— not missionary in the commonly accepted sense, in that a church will entertain itself by hearing interesting addresses on work done in far-distant lands, and by raising money for such work, to secure a better standing in its denomination or to make a reputation for its minister; but missionary in the sense that it is the function of a church in America to do in its own community the same kind of work which our great missionaries, like Carey and Living-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

stone and Stewart of Lovedale, did in foreign lands; that is, real constructive community service. There is something extremely humorous in the fact that a church will applaud an address on the work of Livingstone, and then, when its minister tries to persuade it to do the same kind of work in its own community, it will strenuously oppose the suggestion. It is perfectly safe in Africa, but obviously dangerous at home. Of course, I realize that Livingstone was severely criticized by the "pious" people at home for being "unspiritual," and that the men, who today are doing the same kind of work, are criticized by the same class of people and for the same reason. I am here referring to their treatment after they are dead. To be criticized and persecuted while living, to be praised and honored when dead, is the common fate of such pioneers of God.

At the meeting where I had expressed these sentiments, one of my leading trustees, who was also regarded as very "pious" and "orthodox," made a speech, obviously for my benefit, in which he said, speaking both for himself and the other officers, that "he did not think the community expected anything of the church and that the church's best policy was to work for its own welfare." The issue was clearly drawn and well understood by all. I do not deny the right of these men to have any kind of a church they

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

want, if they will pay for it and the people will agree to it. If they want to employ a minister who will be a harmless mouthpiece and obedient clerk of the board of trustees, that is their privilege, and they will have no difficulty in finding this type of minister. I am only saying that, if they intend to make of it an exclusive social club, they have no moral right to masquerade under the name of a Christian church. I am only saying that, entirely apart from considerations of human welfare, and looking at the question from the standpoint of self-preservation, the policy of my officers is suicidal for the church. "He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it," applies with scientific accuracy to a church as well as to an individual. It ought to be self-evident that a church which takes no interest in the affairs of a community can hardly expect the community to take an interest in it. I am only saying that when a minister is called, the officers ought to be honorable enough to tell him what kind of a church they want, so that he may not be deceived by subterfuges and dishonest concealments, as he usually is, but may have a fair chance to discover whether he can conscientiously accept their call. I am only trying to make clear that my officers' ideals and mine concerning the nature of Christianity and the function of the church were radically and irreconcilably at variance.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

I could narrate several more experiences which portray the nature of this radical difference in our ideals. But the experience concerning the building for work with boys is typical, and is quite sufficient to make clear the principle now under discussion. They objected to this building because they said it was not the proper kind of work in which a church ought to engage. They meant that it was too secular. The explanation of their objection was the existence in their minds of a distinction between the sacred and the secular. This is highly significant. It constitutes one of the chief obstacles in the path of the church's usefulness, which must be squarely faced at the very beginning of any attempt on the part of the church to adjust herself to modern human needs.

The only honest way to meet this difficulty, so far as I know, is to realize and frankly say that the distinction, commonly made by the church, between sacred and secular, is wholly false. It exists nowhere in fact, but only in one's imagination. What is commonly meant by the secular is the thing we do when God is not looking. But it is the Christian position, and no doubt true to the facts, to say that there is nothing we do when God is not looking. This is God's world and to him it is all sacred. Moreover, any man who thinks about it seriously must perceive that God is a democrat. For him to make a distinc-

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

tion among the things He has made and among people and their activities, labeling some sacred and some secular, would be like a father disowning his own child, who nevertheless still remains his child. The true character of a thing is never altered by the label we choose to place upon it. To label a thing secular does not make it so; it merely deceives the labeler and perhaps his readers. Theological doctrines have done frightful damage to human life, and caused the cruelest of wars to be fought, but among all the doctrines, I know of few which have been more harmful than this false distinction between the sacred and the secular. The destruction of this distinction is so essential to any reform of the church and to the cause of democracy, that I shall consider it at greater length in a later chapter. I mention it here to indicate its bearing on the church's attempt to do community work.

The alleged secular character of our proposed work for boys was the only objection which the trustees brought against it, but it was sufficient to kill the enterprise. It is possible, though not probable, that this false idea of the sacred and secular may, in the dim future, be dislodged from their minds by the gentle art of preaching. I tried it for eight years, and although I changed the mental point of view of most in the congregation, the effect on the leaders was not enough

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

so that you could notice it. Yet such a change is conceivable. There was another obstacle to our proposed enterprise for boys, which was never mentioned by the trustees, but which weighed heavily on my own mind. It was equally fundamental, because it involved, not only the task of changing the minds of the trustees, but necessitated a radical reform in the organization of the church. I refer to denominationalism.

My church was a sectarian church. It faced a big human community need. It had the money to meet it. But assuming that the trustees could have been persuaded that the work was not too "secular" for the church to undertake, the fact that my church bore a sectarian label would in all probability have defeated the enterprise. There were five other sectarian churches in the same ward of the town. For one sect to undertake a work designed to include all the boys, and needing all the boys in order to succeed, would be unfair to the other sects and would naturally create in them a spirit of jealousy and lead to competitive enterprises, all equally weak because divided. Sectarianism is suicidal competition. This experience typifies the central fact which I am seeking to make clear, the church's slavery to denominationalism and the need to achieve freedom from the limitations which this slavery imposes. By repeated attempts to render civic services, I discovered that I was handi-

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

capped and defeated by the sectarian circle which my own church built around me as a fence. My hands and feet were tied. I felt as if I were in a cage. The attempt to be a citizen of the community and also a minister of a sectarian church produced an irreconcilable conflict which I was compelled to face and could not evade.

It is not my purpose here to consider the immense moral damage done to human life by sectarianism; the damage, for example, to education. Sectarianism is causing the Bible to be increasingly an unknown book. The sects refuse to allow the teaching of it through other agencies than their own, fearing that the teaching may not be dominated by their own particular interpretation. They are responsible for the strange and absurd contradiction that the book, which by common consent is our greatest piece of literature, and which has contributed the best elements of our civilization, making us what we are, that this book is not permitted by law to be taught, or, in some states, even read, in the greatest of our educational institutions, the public school. The moral and intellectual injury to the Nation thus caused is beyond compute.

I am not here treating the damage which sectarianism does to democracy. Worship has been described as "the consciousness of kind." It is the expression of the awareness of resemblances. But it is also the expression of the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

awareness of differences. It expresses the resemblances of a small group, but also the differences between this group and all other groups. So that while religion, if it is given any real content and means something more than mere forms and ceremonies, is the greatest integrating force in human life, yet the sects are among the greatest disintegrating forces in human life. They foster prejudice, group antagonisms, and have caused the bitterest wars in human history. They constitute one of the greatest practical obstacles to community coöperation. They contradict the basic Christian principle of human sympathy and democracy.

I am not here considering the damage which sectarianism does to the economic freedom of the people. It is obvious that the division of Christian men and women into small sectarian groups so divides their financial resources as to reduce them to a state of dependence on the large gifts of a few rich men. They are thus robbed, not only of their financial freedom, but of their moral and intellectual freedom as well. If they were mobilized in larger numbers, they could retain their self-respect through self-support. Moreover, the building of expensive church edifices to gratify denominational pride vastly increases the overhead charges of the community and puts on the people a heavy financial burden. My own church plant was

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

valued at one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. A neighboring church recently invested in its building two hundred thousand. These buildings are used only a small fraction of the time. I regard such a use of money as morally wrong. The moral wrongness becomes glaringly apparent, when one becomes aware of the suffering due to poverty often existing under the very shadow of such palatial buildings.

I do not dwell on these aspects of the evil of sectarianism, although they constitute serious indictments against it, indictments easy to sustain if the case were tried in the court of reason and common sense. I do not dwell on them, because I want to look at the question from a wholly constructive point of view. The point I seek to make clear is the limitation which a sectarian label imposes on a church, assuming that it has a desire to render a large human service. This fact was brought home to me with particular force when, during this period of my mental evolution, I was requested by the Federal Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Houston, to write a paper for him on the organization of a country community. For this paper I prepared a diagram to represent the problem to the eye. I used the figure of a community wheel. In it I let the people be represented by the rim and all the social institutions and activities by the spokes. It became apparent that the key to the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

problem of community organization is to discover the best instrument to act as the hub of the wheel, an organizing agency which will coördinate its activities, economize its expenditures of time and money, harness its unused resources of men and institutions, and create a real community spirit as the dynamic power of its social and business life. The need of such a hub is obvious; what shall constitute the hub of this wheel has hitherto been regarded as an unsolved social puzzle.

In my first diagram I put the church in the hub. A man naturally loves the institution to which he is giving his life, and he takes pride in his own profession. He wants to see it perform a real function in human life. Moreover, coöperation is first of all a state of mind, and I felt that one of the obvious duties of the church is to create this state of mind, and help organize society on the basis of friendship. But very soon I was compelled to take the church out of the hub and make a new diagram, because the church's sectarian character manifestly disqualifies it for any such function, however much we may be devoted to it. I imagined myself going into a country community to do what sorely needs to be done for such communities, as I have often desired to do, because the social and economic salvation of country life I regard as one of our chief and most profound national

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

needs from whatever point of view it is regarded. But in making this effort, if I should permit myself to become the minister of a sectarian church, I should at once defeat my own purpose. By building a sectarian fence about myself, I should voluntarily shut myself off from the very thing I came to reach; that is, the community as a whole. I should become a disintegrating instead of an integrating force.

The institution, which is adapted to be the hub of a community wheel, will be treated in a later chapter, but at this stage of our discussion the essential thing to see is that the church is incapacitated for this function either in the country or city, and to see further that the reason is that the church has degenerated into a sect and has thus voluntarily defeated its avowed purpose.

I need not have gone so far afield to discover this fact, for my own church exhibited it in striking fashion. We have in our section of the town a very flourishing woman's club, reaching the women of the whole community, managed by remarkably able women, and doing a spiritual and educational work of the highest value for human welfare. But they have no clubhouse and have been using unsatisfactory rented quarters. They are now planning, in connection with another club, a fifty-thousand-dollar building, thus increasing the community's overhead

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

charges, which are already much too high. And yet our church is a handsome structure with every facility adapted for the social and educational activities of the club. But there it stands idle most of the time. It is just what the woman's club needs, and yet it can't use it. Moreover, there is in our ward a beautiful public school auditorium, so that when the new clubhouse is built, we shall have, within five minutes' walk of each other, three handsome and expensive auditoriums all used and paid for by the same people. What a pointed illustration of the utter lack of any intelligent coöperation. And yet the people of this community are highly intelligent; but they seem to have more money than they know how to spend wisely. It is typical of a general condition. Such a condition exists only because we are either stone-blind to what ought to be obvious facts, or else we are not honest or courageous enough to face them; probably both.

The obvious fact which concerns us here, and which we have not been honest or courageous enough to face, is this: The only obstacle worthy of mention which stands between my church equipment and its use by the woman's club is a sectarian label. If a little label is responsible for a big financial burden, both the original cost and the yearly maintenance of such a building, and if, as I believe, the financial

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

damage is the least part of the injury done by this label, why not remove it? Well, why not? I can see no valid reason why it should not be abolished and a dozen valid reasons why it should. It is not a federation of sects that we need; it is the abolition of them. The church must achieve freedom from denominational provincialism, if it ever hopes to restore its waning influence and regain the respect of large and increasing numbers of intelligent men.

I appreciate the fact that the sects had their origin in honest attempts to emphasize and stand for particular elements in the Christian theory of life, which were in special need of emphasis. But the distinctive truth which each sect volunteered to sponsor has now become the common possession of all Christians. Whatever need may have existed to justify their original division into sects no longer exists to justify their continued separation.

I appreciate the fact that the vested interests and missionary enterprises now conducted by the sects would, if they decided to abolish their sectarian labels, constitute complex problems, which would need to be adjusted with the utmost courtesy and justice. But such adjustment is quite possible, if there is sufficient desire for it. Whenever the will to do a thing is present, the way to do it is usually discovered. A possible plan of adjustment will be found in proportion

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

as the sects discover that by a coördination and mobilization of their moral and material resources, they will not only relieve themselves of a needless burden and vastly increase their influence for good, but also, as I believe, greatly increase rather than decrease their present financial resources. However this may be, the adjustment of vested interests is a detail. A highly important detail, it is true, but still a detail. The main thing is to see clearly that sectarian labels are now doing immense moral damage to human life, and whether or not it pays financially, they ought to be abolished.

I appreciate the fact that historically the sects were born as the result of the operation of a principle of supreme value, the principle of the freedom of thought and the exercise of private judgment, a principle established by the Italian Renaissance and the German Reformation, a principle productive of everything of most spiritual value in our modern world. But the best things are always capable of most abuse. The multiplication of sects is a striking exhibit of such abuse. What was good in principle became bad in practice. Vice of almost every sort is just the excess of virtue. The chief sects were importations from Europe and have perpetuated Old-World theological disputes, which ought to have been forgotten. But in the free atmosphere of America, our excessive indi-

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

vidualism has added to their number to an alarming extent. According to the last census there were 186 distinct sects or denominations. However valuable are the contributions made by the sects to human thought, as they undoubtedly have been, and however natural were their growth in the evolution of the modern world, yet it is becoming increasingly clear to intelligent men that our present excessive sectarianism is now a menace to human welfare. The important inquiry, therefore, is not how the sects arose or what their past service may have been, but rather how are we to stop their multiplication and liberate them from the limitations they impose on their public usefulness? For we are coming to believe that they are un-American, un-Christian, and undemocratic.

The abolition of sectarian labels, one would suppose, ought not to be difficult, when one examines the labels themselves. Such an examination compels the conviction that by losing these labels we should lose nothing worthy of preservation. "The adjective," said Voltaire, "is the enemy of the noun." These sectarian labels are enemies of the church and place a limitation upon its good influence. The terms "Presbyterian," "Methodist," "Baptist," "Catholic," "Protestant," "Unitarian," "Trinitarian," are all too small. They are a source of weakness and separation. The term "Catholic"

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

seems large, but it no longer describes a fact, but only expresses a constantly decreasing hope. The term "Protestant" suggests weakness itself. It is a negative attitude. No church ought to exist just to be against something. It ought to be for something. Almost all of these sectarian labels are based on unimportant details of doctrine or of church government. Think of basing the church's name on the mode of applying water as a symbol rather than on the thing the water symbolizes; or on the method of regulating one's religious life rather than on the kind of life he ought to lead; or on the age of the church officers rather than on their character and intelligence, as the names "Baptist," "Methodist," and "Presbyterian" do. The only sect, so far as I know, which bears a name that even remotely suggests the ideal and function of the Christian church is the "Society of Friends." To form men into societies of friends was indeed one of Jesus' chief objects. It is a beautiful name and yet the common name by which they are called, the "Quakers," arose out of a trifling incident of no consequence. Our sectarian divisions have disintegrated our society and spoiled our friendship. To this separation among Christians, the Friends have contributed their full share in spite of their splendid exhibition of the Christian spirit in other respects and their heroic service to moral progress.

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

Almost none of these labels say anything of any importance. This fact has been dulled for us by familiarity, but it becomes amusingly apparent when the labels are transplanted to a foreign soil. The Chinese word for "Baptist" is the "big wash church"; for "Presbyterian," it is "the church of the ruling old men"; for the Protestant Episcopal, it is "the church of the kicking overseers." The difference in doctrine among the sects fares no better than their names. The Chinese, with keen insight, say that the difference between the Methodist and Presbyterian is that "the Methodist is sure he has it, but is afraid he will lose it; the Presbyterian is sure he will not lose it, but is afraid he has n't got it." It is the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee. In the presence of profound human need, it is of small consequence whether a man gets a big or a little wash. Our discovery of the basic quality and importance of the true Christian principles makes it seem almost as absurd to apply sectarian adjectives to the noun "Christian" as to say there is such a thing as a Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian multiplication table, or a Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian version of the Ten Commandments. The absurdity becomes even something worse, if we should dare to inquire whether Jesus was a Baptist, a Methodist, or a Presbyterian. The very suggestion is an insult to his

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

intelligence and an inconceivable limitation upon his human sympathies.

The significant fact for us to recognize is that the day of denominationalism is done. It is highly suggestive that the Greek word for "sect" is the root of our word "heresy." Of all heresies the practical heresy of sectarianism has done perhaps more damage to spiritual and intellectual welfare than any other. We are beginning to see that sectarian labels must be abolished, not only for the sake of moral progress, but to save the church itself from committing suicide. A few years ago there was, in the Central Park zoölogical garden of New York City, a snake that was unable to shed its old skin. The new skin seemed well formed. Repeated attempts were made to assist the snake, but for some unaccountable reason it could not shed the old skin. The result, of course, was inevitable; the snake died. Sectarian labels with all that they imply are, like a last year's skin, not only a useless handicap, but will be the means of strangling its life unless they are shed.

If the sects have ever received a sufficient shock to stimulate them to shed their old skins, renew their life, and mobilize their moral forces, that shock has been administered by the Great War in Europe. It has revealed their humiliating moral failure, especially in the land where the German Reformation first saw

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

the light. I say humiliating, because, while the Socialists of Germany have been severely blamed for their failure to prevent this crime against civilization, it has occurred to no one to blame the sects for not preventing it. No one expected enough from them to blame them for not doing it. We only blame that in which we believe. The most damaging indictment against the church is that no one believed in its vitality enough to blame it for having no formative effect on the Nation's ideals. The Great War has not injured the ideals of Galilee; it has dramatically demonstrated the need of them. But it has revealed the bankruptcy of organized Christianity.

In the glaring light of this revelation, serious men are keenly feeling, as they have never before felt, that while brute force, commercial greed, and racial hatred are made to be popular gods, and that when men through the worship of such gods are committing national and race suicide, when, in short, there is a death struggle going on between the ideals of Corsica and the ideals of Galilee, it is a stupid and frivolous waste of time to discuss pin-point sectarian differences. It insults a right-minded man's intelligence and betokens a lack of human sympathy and moral sanity. With the impact of this revelation upon the conscience, one feels humiliated to enter into any debate at all concerning sec-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

tarian labels, which, even if they have any real significance, are trifling and unimportant in comparison.

The silver lining to this dark cloud is the fact, that even before the war ended, the revelation of the church's moral bankruptcy inaugurated a movement in England among the sects to regain their sense of relative values and to mobilize their moral forces. To what extent this awakened impulse to abolish sectarian differences will be able to release the unused resources of the sects, no one can venture to predict. It remains to be seen. The success of the attempt depends fundamentally on one thing, the ability of men to differ in opinion without differing in feeling.

There is a popular old story, whose long history Charles Sumner once wrote for the "Atlantic Monthly," which exhibits at once both the cause and cure of sectarianism. The story is that "when Abraham sat at his tent door according to his custom waiting for strangers to entertain, he espied an old man stooping and leaning on his staff, weary with age and travel, coming towards him, who was an hundred years old. He received him kindly, washed his feet, provided supper, caused him to sit down, but observing that the old man ate and prayed not, nor begged for a blessing on his meat, he asked him why he did not worship

## DENOMINATIONAL FREEDOM

the God of heaven. The old man told him that he worshiped the fire only and acknowledged no other God, at which answer Abraham grew so zealously angry that he thrust the old man out of his tent and exposed him to all the evils of the night and an unguarded condition. When the old man was gone, God called to Abraham and asked him where the stranger was. He replied, ‘I thrust him away because he did not worship thee.’ God answered him, ‘I have suffered him these hundred years, although he dishonored me, and couldst thou not endure him one night?’”

The ancient and inveterate inability of man to differ in opinion without differing in feeling, which Abraham is represented as displaying, is the real cause of all sectarianism and the chief obstacle in the way of its abolition. But the story itself condemns the sectarianism which it portrays. That’s why it was written. Our ground of hope is the fact that this condemnation is the secret of the story’s wide popularity and the reason why men admire it. Man’s admiration for that which is higher than he at present possesses is the tap-root of all progress. We grow like that which we admire. If, then, we assume that men’s admiration for freedom from sectarian limitation has grown strong enough to cause a motor reaction and to seek its abolition, how shall it be achieved? The answer to this question is the subject of the next chapter.



V

THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW: A COMMUNITY CHURCH

*The faith that lies unuttered in the soul of the nation is not a sectarian religion. And the course of contemporary history in England, in France, in Spain, and Portugal, and throughout the world fortifies us in the persuasion that professional religion of whatever kind is doomed to die. But does this mean that the real faith of men is weakening, that idealism is passing as a dream and that the universal heart is growing cold? No! The fact is that the ecclesiastical establishments are not religious enough to contain the man of the modern spirit.*

CHARLES FERGUSON

## V

### THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW: A COMMUNITY CHURCH

"CHRISTIANITY," says Woodrow Wilson, "has been accepted by a large part of the world for several centuries, but we have never yet quite discovered the organization that makes it work." The truth of this statement is dramatically exhibited by the failure of the organized church of Europe, which the Great War has revealed, and by the similar failure of the American church to direct, in any constructive fashion, the social conscience. Because an ideal is difficult to realize is no sufficient reason to abandon the attempt to realize it. On the contrary, it is the very reason why the attempt ought repeatedly to be renewed. All worthwhile ideals are difficult. Their difficulty constitutes not only their value, but also their fascination. To surrender before a difficult task is cowardice, which is an unthinkable attitude for any man of spirit.

I resigned from my church because it refused to permit itself to be used as an organization through which to operate the Christian religion,

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

and therefore I could not remain its minister on honorable terms. I faced the alternative of Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior":

"Who, if he rise to station of command,  
Rises by open means; and there will stand  
On honorable terms or else retire,  
And in himself possess his own desire."

The fact that I discovered that the church, as at present organized, is an instrument so defective that the democratic ideals of the Christian religion cannot be operated through it, did not lead me to conclude that it was useless to try to operate them. Rather it laid on me the obligation of searching for the instrument that would best serve these ideals, either mending the instrument we have or making a new one. When Socrates was once asked, "How does one arrive at Mount Olympus?" he answered, "By doing all your walking in that direction." When I left my church, I only renewed my resolve to do all my walking toward the Christian ideals. The fight for democracy in the past has never been lost, only delayed a little by the failure of the church. The present failure of the church as an instrument of democracy is a challenge, not a truce. Therefore, the question which presents itself at this point of my story is this — "Can we discover a type of organization for the church, which will make

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

Christianity work, or work better than it has hitherto?"

After I had decided to resign from my church, but before I had publicly announced my determination, the board of directors of the Princeton work in Peking issued me a call to deliver in Peking and Tokio a series of lectures "designed to set forth a vital, modern, and constructive interpretation of the Christian religion," and to publish them in book form for the use of Chinese students. The call was approved by the International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association and I accepted it. I have prepared the lectures and it is my purpose to deliver them in China and Japan as soon as my other engagements will permit.

The Princeton Committee did not ask me to lecture on the church, but on the Christian ideals, and yet it is highly probable that, after the lectures are delivered, the Chinese students will say something like this: 'We have been in contact with Western modes of scientific thought and therefore your statement of the Christian religion in modern terms is what we wanted to hear, whether or not we agree with all your conclusions. For the most part we have no difficulty in accepting the Christian ideals as you state them. The operation of them is the difficult task. We need some form of organization through which to attempt to work them.'

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

We know very little about the sectarian divisions of the church in European history and care less. What form of church organization have you in America, which you regard as the most effective instrument through which to operate the Christian religion and which you could enthusiastically recommend us to establish here in the new and constructive period of our history?' It is not only probable, it is a certainty, that I shall have to face this inquiry. The question is entirely legitimate. For after you tell men what to do, the next natural step is, how are they to do it? Some Chinese students in Columbia University, to whom I gave a course of lectures, have already asked me this embarrassing question. I suggest that my readers at this point attempt to formulate their own answers to it. According to the census of 1906, there were in the United States 186 separate denominations. There are probably 200 now. Which one of these would you recommend to China?

An evasive answer is not only wrong, but futile. The leader of a group of fifty Chinese students at the Northfield Summer Conference, to whom I gave a course of lectures, in a private interview before the lectures began, begged me not to refer to the condition of the church in America. He asked me to describe it not as it is, but as it ought to be. Because, said he,— and

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

this is the humiliating fact,— large numbers of thoughtful and influential Christian students, who are expected to become leaders and officers of the church after they return to China, refuse to have anything to do with the church, on account of the impression which the churches in America have made upon them. President Wilson once attended a Conference on Foreign Missions called for the purpose of erasing the line between Christian churches in foreign lands. He said at this meeting that “while he sympathized with the purpose of the conference, he hoped that those who were converted in foreign fields would not come and look at us.” But they have come and looked at us, and the result of their observation is what I have stated it to be. What an absurd situation! The churches in America destroy the respect of Chinese students who come here, and then spend money to send missionaries to China in the futile attempt to win back their lost confidence. My lectures were not designed to treat the question of the church, but the leader of the students feared that I might do so, and since he intended to become a minister, he thought the best policy was to hide the facts. In due time he will learn that hiding the facts can never deceive these keen and open-minded students, and that the only way the church can gain their respect is by making itself worthy of it.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

In view of the obvious facts, which these students see for themselves, in view of my inside knowledge of the American churches and my discovery that they deliberately prevent the teaching of fundamental Christian ideals, and in view of the church's failure revealed by the European War and the consequent movement already begun to reconstruct it, what ought my answer to this question to be, if we assume it ought to be either honest or helpful? It seems evident to me that it can be only one thing. I shall answer the question by saying that there is no form of the church at present in America that I can honestly recommend to China. How can I recommend any one of our American sects, for which an increasing number of our best men are losing their respect, and when I believe that the day of sectarianism is done? I shall do my best to persuade Chinese students to make the Kingdom of God their major loyalty, but I can recommend none of the sects, because they have become too much of a liability to the Kingdom of God. It has come to pass that a sectarian label is a libel. It misrepresents the mental attitude of the members of the church which bears it. It denies more than it affirms. It therefore does more harm than good to the cause it pretends to serve.

While I could not honestly recommend to China the form of any of our sectarian churches,

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

which I believe are destined to pass away,— a process which has already begun,— I can heartily recommend a form of the organized church, which I believe is destined to be the new and dominant church of the future, signs of which are now appearing on every hand. While China is in the process of building a Christian church, it would be not only bad business, but morally wrong to recommend a form of the church which we believe has begun to pass away. The only kind of a church which I can urge China to build is a community church. Such a suggestion will cause little shock in China, because the remarkable growth in the spirit of unity among Christian leaders in non-Christian lands makes it the only fitting suggestion. A coöperative committee of the missionary boards of Protestant churches has established churches for the Anglo-American communities in Peking, Tokio, Yokohama, Kobe, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, and Colombo. But no one of them is a sectarian church. They are all union churches. The situation permitted no other kind. They may not be community churches in the real sense of that term, but they are approximations to it.

The Chinese students, with their sound practical good sense, are now writing papers and debating the question as to whether they need both a church and a Young Men's Christian Association. I hold no brief for the Young Men's

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

Christian Association. It has many of the faults which the church has, and some which the church does not have. But it has at least the elements of real power. It has an efficient business organization; it is to a degree non-sectarian; and it has bridged the chasm between the secular and sacred, on account of which it is able to meet practical human needs. These elements ally it to the community movement and explain its remarkable success in a country like China and in other countries as well. One of America's leading Christian business men, who has traveled extensively in China, told me recently that he believed the future of Christianity in China was in the hands of the Young Men's Christian Association, and although he was a devoted member of the Baptist church, he would give no money to propagate his own sect there, but he had given the money to build and equip one Young Men's Christian Association building and one hospital. In view of facts like these, to suggest any other than a community type of church would be deliberate blindness to the manifest signs of the times.

Not the least valuable of the returns which have come from the attempt to propagate sectarian churches in foreign lands has been the recent discovery that they cannot be propagated with permanent success. The necessity of Christian unity is a humiliating but most val-

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

able contribution, which the so-called non-Christian East has made to the so-called Christian West. During the last decade, America has shown some appreciation of this contribution and has begun to make a motor reaction to it. But the churches in America have been challenged not only by the Christian spirit in the Far East, but also by certain disturbing facts at home. The wide and rapidly growing indifference to the churches, the persistent refusal of young men to enter the ministry, the increasing performance of the church's natural functions by independent community agencies, have begun to shock the churches into a realization that they are being left high and dry on the hillside while the great moral enterprises of the Kingdom of God are passing them indifferently by.

The general indifference to the church is not a thing to be wondered at; the only cause for wonder is that it is not greater than it is. Here is a typical township in Pennsylvania: The population is twelve hundred representative American citizens. There are three post-offices, seven schoolhouses, one bank, and one saloon. The church figures are as follows: number of denominations, 10; church buildings, 10; congregations, 14; money invested in church property, \$30,000; amount annually raised, \$4,000; contributed by home mission boards, \$500;

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

total church members, 405; average church membership, 29; average Sunday attendance, 40; number of ministers, 10; maximum salary, \$750; one has college and theological training; seven little more than a high-school course. Does the fact that over sixty-three per cent. of the people of the township are not members of any church require any further explanation?

The same general conditions are revealed by surveys made in Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri; by a wide survey of Vermont and New York and by a forthcoming survey made of the entire State of Ohio. A similar condition exists in our villages and small towns. Here is a typical manufacturing town, Factoryville: There are about seven thousand inhabitants. Of these about six thousand are immigrants employed in the factories. There are about one thousand native Americans. A Roman Catholic church ministers to possibly one thousand of the foreigners; a German Lutheran church ministers to about one hundred of the Protestants. The other four Protestant churches minister almost exclusively to the native American population.

The same lack of efficiency and Christian spirit exists among city churches and to a greater extent. In one of our Eastern cities there are to-day three beautiful expensive churches of the *same* denomination in the same neighborhood; two of them have each an endowment of

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

\$120,000, the other an endowment of \$50,000. The yearly budgets of the three churches are \$12,500, \$12,500, and \$15,000. The three pieces of ground on which they stand are worth \$100,000, \$50,000, and \$40,000. The buildings and equipment cost at least fifty per cent. more than the land. We have, then, an investment of \$475,000, an endowment of \$290,000, and an annual operating expense of \$40,000, and yet the Sunday morning attendance at a very generous estimate averages not over two hundred and fifty persons. The evening audiences are too small and irregular to count. Moreover, these buildings are used very little more than one day in seven. To say nothing of the unneighborly spirit thus exhibited, if the same frightful waste of money took place in any other business, it would not only be declared bankrupt in six months, but the men responsible for it would be regarded as incapable of handling their own affairs.

In a new suburban section of another of our Eastern cities within the last ten years, five hundred thousand dollars have been spent in excess of the church needs of the community, because of a mad scramble on the part of the various sects to get a foothold in the community for the sake of sectarian pride. The nervous strain of the process is indicated by the fact that one fine minister broke down and died as

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

a result of it. In other words, the people of the city would have benefited physically, socially, economically, and spiritually, if this vast amount had not been spent at all. How can a man of ordinary intelligence respect an institution which exhibits so little common sense and Christian spirit? It is my conviction that the majority of the people who have grown indifferent to it are quite justified in their attitude. It is highly significant that the problem of the church to-day is not how to win evil men, as it once was, but how to hold good men. Twenty years ago John Burroughs wrote: "The religious skeptics of to-day are a very large class, larger than ever before, and they are among the most helpful, intelligent, patriotic, upright, and wisely conservative of our citizens. Probably four fifths of our literary men are such; a large proportion of journalists and editors; half the lawyers; more than half the doctors; a large percentage of the teachers; a larger percentage of the business men; almost all the scientific men." If this was true then, it is still more true now.

I have stated a few facts concerning the condition of the churches, not for the purpose of dwelling on them, for they are already well known, but in order to avoid indefinite general statements. We need waste no time in discussing how the church came into its present con-

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

dition or in fixing the blame for it. It is the condition and not the theory which confronts us. Although a knowledge of the facts is essential, I am far more interested in the remedy for the difficulty. The question before us is whether we can discover an organization which will make Christianity work better than the organization we now have, a discovery which President Wilson says we have not yet made. I attended the recent church and country life convention in Columbus, Ohio, for the express purpose of seeing how far along the leaders of the church had gotten toward such a discovery. From the delegates of thirty-eight states there was ample testimony as to the deplorable condition of the church, and from the leaders there were most inspiring suggestions and approximations toward a remedy, but no constructive programme, fundamental enough to meet the need. General coöperation among denominations is very good indeed so far as it goes, but it does not get very far. The plan has the essential weakness of working from the top down instead of from the bottom up. It never touches the roots of the disease. If you have a working plan among independent sects, you still have sectarianism which is the very thing which needs to be destroyed.

In a recent book, the editors of the "Homiletic Review," Scott and Gilmore, have gath-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ered a large amount of data from leaders of the church in Europe and America, analyzed and classified it. One of the chief results of the investigation is that there is general agreement only as to the fact of wide indifference to the church, but disagreement as to its cause and no suggestion of a remedy. The upshot of it all is that the church is still in the woods; that it is becoming conscious it ought not to be there, but that it has not found the way out. We have had enough surveys. We know the facts sufficiently well. What is the way out of the woods is the urgent question. At the Columbus convention I had a feeling that many of the leaders had a clear conviction as to the remedy, but lacked the courage to say what it was.

With the facts of the church's condition in America, Europe, and the Far East, clearly before us, and in our hearts a desire to be helpful and the courage to be honest, what is the needed remedy? It seems to me clearly to be this: We must replace all sectarian churches by a new and fundamentally different type of church. What that type ought to be, the pronounced signs of the times abundantly indicate. It is a community church. The only way to reform the present church is to replace it with a better one. The church of to-morrow is the community church. I realize that a constructive criticism is always the most radical kind of

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

criticism, because it necessitates the removal of so much dead lumber. It seems to me idle to proceed with our problem unless we first of all see clearly that what the church needs is not mere improvement, but a revolution. It needs complete reorganization. To use a few poultices is a waste of time. Only an operation can save its life, because the disease is deep-seated. To make a few improvements to the church instead of a radical moral reformation is like the attempt to purify the water in a well by painting the pump.

What, then, is a community church in the real meaning of this term? To substitute the term "community" for a sectarian label is, of course, no remedy. The church I left, because it failed to stand for Christian ideals, had in its official title an abundance of beautiful words, such as "Christian" and "union" and "congregational." But in fact it was not "union" in its treatment of its members, nor "congregational" in its government, nor "Christian" in its spirit. We must change the church's nature as well as its name. I do not condemn the church as at present organized because it is imperfect; I condemn it because I believe it is morally and officially wrong in its ideals and its methods, and because it deliberately closes its mind to any proposed change for the better. It is not so much what the church does, but what it sanc-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

tions which fixes its moral status. Christianity does not condemn a man for doing wrong; it condemns him for not doing right, which is quite a different thing. If, then, we are to put a real content into the term "community," what ought that content to be? <sup>1</sup>

A community church, first of all, is one which is organized democratically. It must be democratic intellectually, financially, and socially. The problem of the modern church is its attitude toward democracy. Speaking generally the churches to-day are deliberately organized in such a way as to put dogma above intelligence, money above character, and sectarianism above brotherhood. Whether done consciously or unconsciously, such is the fact. For myself I have got so far as this, that never again shall I consent to be the pastor of any church which in theory and practice prefers dogma to intelligence; money to character; and sectarian exclusiveness to human brotherhood. I regard these three attitudes as morally wrong and un-Christian. But they are the official attitudes of over ninety per cent. of the churches to-day. These are the three great blights upon the church and account for its present troubles. Any attempt, therefore, to solve the church's

<sup>1</sup>A statement and brief interpretation of what the author believes to be the seven cardinal virtues of a community church will be found in Appendix A.

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

problem, which fails to remove these blights, is merely playing with the fringes of the problem. The last three chapters of my story treated these three fundamental difficulties of the church, and indicated the way to remove them. When they are removed, the foundations of a community church will be laid and not before. It is not possible for a church to be democratic so long as it is dominated by dogma, money, and sectarianism.

I do not mean to say that the remedies I have proposed for these three blights will guarantee that any church will remain democratic. I mean to say that they will make it possible for it to be democratic and difficult for it to be autocratic. But however democratically a church may be organized, it is essential to remember that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty"; because men ambitious for power will always seek to dominate the church for their selfish purposes. How can a church be kept democratic? I know of but one way. After having reorganized it democratically, we ought to adopt, as part of its regular method of procedure, the initiative, referendum, recall, and preferential ballot, both as regards its officers and its policies, so that the people may have the machinery through which they can express their will. But to-day the churches are neither organized democratically nor is there anywhere

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

in operation the machinery by which they can be kept democratic. Until church government becomes government by all its members, it lacks the first elements of the Christian spirit.

Inasmuch as the most subtle and sinister of these three dangers is the worship of money, a community church cannot afford to deal with it softly nor compromise with it in any particular. Especially since the general impression is that the churches are worshipers of money, the subject needs to be treated heroically. In order that the community church may not compromise its freedom through dependence on a few big givers to pay the chronic church deficit, its minister ought not to receive a fixed salary. His contract with the church ought to stipulate only a minimum and a maximum salary. This would help to guarantee the freedom of both church and minister, and the minister would receive an amount proportionate to the people's ability and to the worth of his own services. Such an arrangement is agreeable to any man of spirit and honor. Speaking for myself, I have seen the church suffer so much injury on account of its yearly deficit that I would never again be willing to receive a fixed salary from any church.

For the same reason it ought to be the fixed policy of the community church to set a definite

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

limit on the size of the annual subscription from any single individual. In the kind of churches to which I have been accustomed, I would make the limit two hundred dollars. It is true that in my church there were at least a half-dozen men whose yearly subscriptions ought to have been one thousand dollars, if they wanted them to be even one third as much in proportion as the average gifts of the poorer people. But then it is customary both for them and the people to regard gifts of money in the light of their absolute size instead of their relative value. This baleful influence and temptation to pauperize the church can be removed only by fixing such a limitation. I think it would be a satisfaction to the rich men themselves to know that there was at least one institution in which they are treated as men rather than as money-bags and where they were respected for their character and intelligence and not for the money the people expected to get out of them.

For the same reason, also, it ought to be the policy of the community church to pay taxes on its property like any other private institution, in order that it may be just. Up to the present, all church buildings and almost all church property have been exempt from taxation. I know of no valid reason why churches now should not pay taxes and many reasons

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

why they should. To exempt churches from taxation violates one of the Nation's constitutional ideals. The United States stands for the absolute separation of church and state. But by relieving the church of taxes, the state is helping to support the church and subsidizes it to that extent. Moreover, the amount of taxes not paid by the church has to be paid by somebody else, and inasmuch as the church now includes in its membership a large majority of the rich, and has alienated the masses, the church's failure to pay taxes is an imposition of the rich upon the poor. This is unjust and un-Christian. At a time when almost the whole population was included in church membership, the injustice was so small as to be negligible. For almost all public revenue then came from the same people in their status either as citizens or churchmen, and it made little difference whether it was paid out of one pocket or another. But now, according to the church's own figures, its membership is only forty per cent. of the population. Moreover, we who are on the inside know that the church lists are padded and dishonest. In addition to this, even after the actual membership is honestly reported, there is a large percentage of members who are merely nominal and take no real part in the church. By a very generous estimate I should say that not over thirty per cent. of the population is in the church in any

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

real sense. Why, then, should a large majority of the people, made up largely of the poor, be compelled by taxation to contribute to the minority, made up largely of the rich, in the support of private institutions in which they do not believe? To say that the people ought to be compelled to believe in them, and forced by taxation to support them, is to restore the methods of the Inquisition and to violate the first principle of democracy for which America stands.

The community church will ask for the privilege of paying taxes on its property. If it can establish this public policy, it will not only correct a manifest social injustice, but will also render a large service to the churches themselves. For the taxation of all church property will help to prevent the needless multiplication of small sectarian churches, and it will decrease the over-indulgence in expensive church plants, which is a burdensome and growing evil. I emphasize the need of radical monetary reforms, because there is no way in which the church can regain the confidence of the people more speedily than by becoming just and honorable in its attitude to money. Mere statements will avail nothing. The people have lost confidence in the honesty of the church's creedal statements to such an extent that they will trust it only when its fine words are translated into deeds. I emphasize

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

this need, also, because it is only by achieving freedom from financial domination that the church can hope to free itself from the domination of its other two enemies, dogma and sectarianism.

I said that when we achieved freedom from dogma, money, and sectarianism we had only laid *the foundations* of a community church. That is to say, that by freeing it from this handicap, we put it in a condition in which it is free to do its work. It is important to see clearly that freedom is only a negative condition. After one has achieved freedom, the chief questions remain to be asked, What is he going to do with it? How is he going to use it? Freedom is of little value till it is filled with a positive purpose. It would be a real gain to moral and political welfare if we dropped the phrase "free from" and substituted for it "free to." We free ourselves from tyrannies in order that we may be able to do the thing we ought to do. A community church, therefore, after having been organized democratically, is one *which stands for a dynamic, not a static religion*. The life of the churches to-day is crystallized in creeds, in ritual, in tradition, and in architecture. A crystal is a dead thing, not a living form. My complaint against the churches is that they are negative, not positive. They have no courage, no conscience, and no convictions. They are

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

not leaders, but followers of public opinion. They come to the help of great moral reforms only after the pioneer period of danger is past and when their help is no longer needed. They are moral neutrals, and a moral neutral is a deserter, for moral neutrality is an impossibility. This fact, I believe, sufficiently explains why so many of the leaders of the great moral causes of God have lost faith in the church. What they think of the church may be accurately expressed in a paraphrase of Browning's words:

"Just for a handful of silver 'it' left us,  
Just for a riband to stick in 'its' coat —  
'It' alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
'It' alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!  
We shall march prospering — not through 'its' presence;  
Songs may inspirit us — not from 'its' lyre;  
Deeds will be done,— while 'it' boasts 'its' quiescence,  
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire."

I desire to be entirely fair to the church. I love it in spite of its failure and want to render it a service. I believe that the great mass of church members mean well, and I still believe it is possible to convert the church to Christianity. But it is no kindness to let a friend freeze to death in the snow, because he feels comfortable. It requires hard blows to make him realize his danger. Any attempt to help the church out of

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

its present condition is futile unless we have the courage to face the facts as they are. The fact is that a small group of Pharisees and Sadducees have, by subtle and devious ways, persuaded the church to sell its soul for money, until as a result of this sale the great moral causes of democracy are winning their victories to-day, not only without the help of the church, but frequently in the face of its pronounced opposition. Church history has repeated itself so often in this respect that the repetition has become monotonous. When Whittier was asked about the progress of the big moral issue of his day, he replied, "Anti-slavery is going on well in spite of mobs, Andover Theological Seminary, and rum." Once after a mob had done its work at Newburyport, where the speakers were pelted with all sorts of unsavory missiles and the meeting was broken up, Whittier turned to an Orthodox minister, one of the few of that day who stood by the cause, and said: "I am surprised that we should be disturbed in a quiet Puritan city like Newburyport. I have lived near it for years and always thought it was a pious city." The aged minister, laying his hand on Whittier's shoulder, answered, "Young man, when you are as old as I am, you will understand that it is easier to be pious than it is to be good." The stupid blunder of the church has been that it is content to be pious and lacks the courage to

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

be good. It is to-day reaping the natural fruits of its cowardice.

*A community church is one that will stand for the things which Jesus stood for.* That and nothing else. Is not this the obvious function of a Christian church? And yet the churches to-day not only do not stand for the things Jesus stands for, but they do not even know what they are. The survey, to which I have referred, made by Scott and Gilmore, reveals the fact that among the church leaders in Europe and America there is “an irreconcilable disagreement as to what the church stands for.” This is not to be wondered at. The curious and surprising fact is that the churches manifest a decided unwillingness to learn what Jesus stands for. This is the discovery I made in my own experience and is the reason why I left my church. I believe the attitude of my own church is typical. If any church officer is inclined to doubt it, he may discover whether or not it is a fact by a very simple experiment. When the pulpit of his church becomes vacant and a committee is appointed to secure a new minister, let him recommend to the committee a candidate, who is an experienced and well-equipped minister, but who says he is willing to accept a call from the church only on the condition that he be granted entire freedom to preach the Christian religion as it is stated in the New Testament and as he

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

is given to understand it by the "Spirit of Truth," which Jesus said is his only authoritative guide. What would such a committee do? One naturally supposes that a Christian church would make a special effort to secure this type of minister. It does nothing of the kind. What would happen in the committee meeting is this. One or two of the pious and orthodox members and one or two of the rich members of it would unite in saying: 'Your candidate may be a very good and able man, but such preaching would *disturb* the church and we must do nothing to hinder the *success* of *our* plant. The fact that he attaches such a condition to his acceptance of a call shows he has no tact. It is out of the question to consider him.' That is to say, the preaching of Christian ideals will disturb some pious people and cause the church to lose the contributions of a few rich men, and the leaders on the committee are more devoted to the physical welfare of the church than to the spiritual interests of the Kingdom of God. The other members of the committee tamely submit to this policy either because of cowardice or because they have less money, for it is the profession of orthodoxy and the possession of money rather than the possession of character that determines a man's influence with church committees.

This state of affairs is so well and generally

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

known that no minister ever conditions his acceptance of a call by any such statement as I have supposed. What he does is skillfully to conceal his real convictions as best he may. For the sake of demonstrating what would happen if a minister made freedom to be honest a condition of his acceptance of a call, I am tempted to lend the use of my name to any forward-looking man who doubts it and who is willing to make the experiment. I do hereby grant him permission to present my name with the above-named condition to the committee of his church seeking to secure a new minister. The only request I make is that he report to me the result of his experiment. I know beforehand what the result will be, because the result, as I have stated it, has already happened to me three times. My name was presented by my friends without any knowledge on my part, and therefore I had no opportunity to state the condition of my acceptance. The committees in each case merely suspected that I would preach such ideals and this suspicion was sufficient to frighten them. I was quite satisfied with their action; for I had already resolved never to accept any church which would not permit me to preach the Christian ideals of the New Testament. It seems well-nigh unbelievable that a minister's desire to preach these ideals insures his defeat as a candidate for a church, and that if he dares to

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

preach them, the loss of his pulpit is a foregone conclusion. But it is strictly true. If Jesus should now come to America and preach as He did in Palestine, the pulpit of the average church is the last place that would give him a hearing. But the "common" people would hear him gladly now, as they did then. The reason for the growing indifference to the church seems to me as clear as sunlight to all except those who refuse to see.

The sufficient reason why the community type of church ought to be organized is that the Christianity of Jesus needs to be made known. Recently we have begun to realize that centuries ago Christianity was captured. The historic movements which made the speedy spread of Christianity possible were the career of Alexander the Great, the rise of the Roman Empire, and the dispersion of the Jews, especially the achievements of Alexander. In the contest with her rivals, with which the spread of Alexander's conquests brought her into conflict, Christianity won the victory. But the price she paid for it was too high. She captured them, but in the process she herself was in turn captured by them. Christianity's three chief captors were, first, Greek speculation and theological dogma, which covered up and distorted her simple democratic message; second, the cults of Isis, Mithra, and Gnosticism, which

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

imported into Christianity such alien elements as the idea that the physical world is the seat of evil, the idea of fate, the idea of sacrifice as a bribe, and the idea of sorcery and superstitious ritual; third, the sale of the church as an organization to the disreputable Emperor Constantine. After Diocletian discovered that the church could not be destroyed, Constantine conceived the clever idea that it could be made useful. It was a masterly stroke of selfish politics. He offered to the church money, respectability, and imperial favor. The church accepted the offer. By this bargain the church sold its soul, forfeited its freedom, and became a captive. It is the saddest tragedy of history, a tragedy well described by Arthur C. Benson, who said: "If ever there was a divine attempt made in the world to shake religion free from its wrappings, it was the preaching of Jesus. Never was there a message which cast so much hope abroad in rich handfuls to the world. The bright and beautiful spirit made its way like a stream of clear water, refreshing thirsty places, till at last the world itself, in the middle of its luxuries and pomp, became aware that here was a mighty force abroad which must be reckoned with; and then the world itself determined upon the capture of Christianity; and how sadly it succeeded can be read in the pages of history; until at last the pure creature, like

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

a barbarian captive, bright with youth and beauty, was bound with golden chains and bidden, bewildered and amazed, to grace the triumph and ride in the very chariot of its conqueror."

For a thousand years the church was such that Jesus could not have returned to the institution built in his memory, without endangering his life. What kind of a reception would it give him now, I wonder? Four hundred years ago the rising tide of democracy, manifesting itself in the Renaissance and Reformation, produced an attempt to liberate captured Christianity. Luther led a revolt against despotic government and financial oppression in the church. But it would be a stupid mistake to suppose that he succeeded in liberating Christianity. He was a panic-stricken progressive. He deserted his own principle. He substituted a paper pope for a flesh-and-blood pope. Luther was not a democrat, as the cowardly part he played in siding with the nobles against the peasants emphatically shows, and the meaning of the Kingdom of God, to which Jesus gave his life, never once dawned on his mind. It is the chief task and dominant aim of the community church to make known the Christian religion as it is stated in the memorabilia of Jesus. All too long have we been content with Christianity according to Luther, according to Paul, according to Augus-

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

tine. Our present urgent need is for Christianity according to Jesus. The dominant desire of the community church will be for intelligence enough to discover it and courage enough to make it known. I am not contending for anything so radical as the practice of the Christian principles. I am only contending that they ought to be made known.

It is not fair, however, to condemn Luther for his failure to understand what is even now only dimly perceived. But it is necessary after four hundred years to state the facts as they are, while we freely acknowledge our debt of gratitude for the service he rendered in the slow and painful progress of democracy. He rendered a service of the highest value in the struggle to secure the individual's liberty to think and in behalf of free education. We are, of course, agreed that freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of every sort, both spiritual and economic, is the chief goal of history. It is the condition without which no progress of any kind is possible. But the best things are always capable of most abuse. Freedom to think, partially secured by the German Reformation, if carried to excess is a disintegrating force. For four hundred years it has led to individualism carried to wild extremes, and it is responsible for the *laissez-faire* policy in the church as well as in industry. It

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

'has divided the church into an incredible number of rival sects and subjected it to weakness and ridicule. "Competition is put forth as the law of life. I have got so far as this," said Frederick D. Maurice, "I know that is a lie. Coöperation is the law of life."

Our present urgent business is to take the next step in Luther's unfinished work, to achieve what was begun, but never completed by him. In performing this task, ought we to go backward or forward? For over a thousand years the church had unity without liberty. For four hundred years it has had liberty without unity. What is the next step? It is axiomatically true that it is neither possible nor desirable to go backward, for the obvious reason that, as Emerson says, our eyes are in our foreheads and not in our hindheads. Moreover, the remedy for the abuse of a thing is not to give up its use altogether, but to make the right use of it. Undoubtedly the church has abused the principle of freedom, but to give it up is "to throw out the baby with the bath." The fact is that the unity of which the church boasted for a thousand years was not unity at all; it was uniformity; and uniformity is both impracticable and morally wrong. It has to be maintained by force, and therefore cannot last, even if secured, and it is contrary to the laws of God's world. Variety in unity and unity in variety are every-

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

where the law of nature. It is not uniformity, but unity that we seek. It is clear that the abuse of freedom can be corrected only by going forward. The cure for democracy is not less but more democracy; that is, a democracy made mature by intelligence and self-control.

For a long period, therefore, the church had uniformity without liberty. Then followed a period in which it had liberty without uniformity. The time has now come when the growing spirit of intelligence and the spirit of good will are leading us to demand a church organized on the principles of *liberty and unity*. When we say this, we express the demand for a community church. A community church, then, is one which stands for unity and liberty. It secures unity and liberty by making its working platform brief and stating it only in general principles. It limits its platform to general statements, not because it desires to limit the scope of its belief, but for exactly the opposite reason, because it refuses to limit the scope of its belief. Coleridge wisely says, "Make any spiritual truth too definite and you make it too small." One of the saddest as well as most humorous blunders of the past is the fact that creeds have been so definite and detailed that the sects became so absorbed in fighting each other over differences of detail, which were quite unimportant even if true, that they forgot the great

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

causes which it was their mission to serve and on which they could have united. The community church will avoid this blunder, by uniting its members on their common goal, which is not difficult, and by making no attempt to unite them on any detailed statement of their starting-point or the methods of attaining the goal, which is not possible. It is, of course, obvious that there must be a clear statement of its fundamental ideals and purposes.<sup>\*</sup> As to what these fundamentals should be, the principle of selection for any institution is that there must be agreement on those principles, the denial of which would destroy the institution itself. In everything except those axiomatic principles, agreement on which is necessary to constitute it a church, the community church not only permits but encourages freedom of thought. The principle of unity and liberty, which is the formative principle of the community church, furnishes the key to its organization. This principle anticipates and answers the question, "Is not the community church just another new sect?" If it is, we ought to pray that it be still-born. But it is out of the weakness of sectarianism that the community church is being born, and its avowed and dominant aim is to decrease the number of sects.

\*A suggested constitution for a community church will be found in Appendix C.

## THE CHURCH OF TO-MORROW

It will accomplish this desired end by a process of absorption and welding. Those sects which refuse to be absorbed, it will weld into a real union. How it proposes to achieve this result is the subject of the next chapter.



**VI**

**THE COMMUNITY CHURCH: AN AMERICAN  
PRODUCT**

*In examining the National government and the State governments, we have never once had occasion to advert to any ecclesiastical body or question, because with such matters government has in the United States absolutely nothing to do. Of all the differences between the Old World and the New this is perhaps the most salient. Half the wars of Europe, half the internal troubles that have vexed European States, have arisen from theological differences or from the rival claims of Church and State. This whole vast chapter of debate and strife has remained virtually unopened in the United States. There is no Established Church.*

JAMES BRYCE

## VI

### THE COMMUNITY CHURCH: AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

THE outstanding characteristic of the American Republic, which is unlike any other in the world, is that it is a double government, a double allegiance. It is a "Republic of Republics." James Bryce, in his "American Commonwealth," accurately describes its unique character. He says:

When within a large political community smaller communities are found existing, the relation of the smaller to the larger usually appears in one or other of the two following forms. One form is that of a league, in which a number of political bodies, be they monarchies or republics, are bound together so as to constitute, for certain purposes, and especially for the purpose of common defense, a single body. The members of such a composite body or league are not individual men, but communities. It exists only as an aggregate of communities, and will therefore vanish so soon as the communities which compose it separate themselves from one another. Moreover, it deals with and acts upon these communities only. With the individual citizen it has nothing to do, no right of taxing him, or judging him, or making laws for him, for in all these matters it is to his own community that the allegiance of the citizen is due. A familiar instance of this form is to be found in the Germanic Confederation as it existed from 1815 till 1866.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

In the second form, the smaller communities are mere sub-divisions of that greater one which we call the Nation. They have been created, or at any rate they exist, for administrative purposes only. Such powers as they possess are powers delegated by the Nation, and can be overridden by its will. The Nation acts directly by its own officers, not merely on the communities, but upon every single citizen; and the Nation, because it is independent of these communities, would continue to exist were they all to disappear. Examples of such minor communities may be found in the departments of modern France and the counties of modern England.

The American Federal Republic corresponds to neither of these two forms, but may be said to stand between them. Its central or National Government is not a mere league, for it does not wholly depend on the component communities which we call the States. It is itself a commonwealth as well as a union of commonwealths, because it claims directly the obedience of every citizen, and acts immediately upon him through its courts and executive officers. Still less are its minor communities, the States, mere subdivisions of the Union, mere creatures of the National Government, like the counties of England or the departments of France. They have over their citizens an authority which is their own, and not delegated by the central government. They have not been called into being by that government. They — that is, the older ones among them — existed before it. They could exist without it.

It will thus be seen that every American citizen lives in concentric circles. He feels two loyalties, one to his state and the other to his

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

nation. Likewise the members of the community church may, so far as they desire to do so, cherish two loyalties, one to the community church and one to their sectarian group. If a Christian desires to retain his connection with a small sectarian circle, because of old associations, and because it is especially congenial to him, that is no reason why he should not at the same time be a member of a larger circle in which he unites with his fellow Christians for purposes common to all. Our problem is how to secure concerted action as the whole, while preserving freedom in the parts. The relation of the community church to its departments is like the relation of the hand to its fingers. The fingers have individual freedom, but they are mobilized in the hand, which becomes one for concerted action. The union is not mechanical, but vital. A community church represents the army and its sectarian departments the regiments. It ought not to be difficult to persuade a man to put the name of the army first, and the name of his regiment second, unless he cares more for the private interests of his regiment than for the success of the army. It is probably true that we shall experience some difficulty in adjusting the relationship between the community church and its departments, just as in our American experiment in democracy we experienced the same kind of difficulty in adjust-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ing the relationship between the National Government and the freedom of the states. But we have successfully made that adjustment in the nation. What we ourselves have already had enough common sense and good will to do as citizens in our political life, is it not reasonable to hope that we shall have enough common sense and good will to do as Christians in our spiritual life? Ought it not to be done with far less difficulty? What has been done once can not only be done again, but be done more easily. The churches will be compelled to follow the example of the nation.

Thus a community church built on the pattern of the nation is not a new sect, but a new type of church. It is a departmental church. It bears the same relation to the sects which the National Government bears to the several States of the Union. When the Republic of the United States was created, it was not a new state that was formed, but a new nation. In a similar manner the community church will weld together the various sectarian groups as departments, without any suggestion of superiority or inferiority among them, but giving to each a status of equality like that which exists among the States of the Union. In addition to the sectarian groups the community church will include a group of persons, who desire no other label than the term "commu-

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

nity," and will show to them the same courtesy which it shows to the sectarian groups. All these groups will unite in holding as many meetings and will conduct as many enterprises as represent their common interests. In addition to these, each group can hold as many meetings as it chooses. Each sectarian department can contribute its own money to the missionary enterprises of its own sect, just as well by being a department of a community church as it can by being a separate sect. If a sectarian group desired to have the Christian ideals presented from its own viewpoint, this could be done by an exchange of pulpits with a minister representing its sect. Such a policy would effect a reform needed on other grounds than fairness to the various points of view represented in the community church. If its pulpit were supplied as college pulpits now are, by a variety of able ministers, its own pastor preaching not more than one or two Sundays a month, the people would get a much higher order of preaching. With his hands filled with administrative work and community activities, no minister can continuously preach twice every Sunday and make his pulpit product such as he wants to make it, and such as the people deserve to receive. Even if the minister have exceptional ability, the people get only one man's point of view.

Many practical details such as these will need

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

to be adjusted. There will be little difficulty in making the adjustment, provided there is the *will* to make it. What chiefly concerns us here is to see clearly what a community church is; to see that it is not only desirable, and to see that it is not a new sect, but a new kind of church demanded by the needs and the better spirit of our day. To understand what a community church is, it is essential to see that it is not a federation of sects. We have now a federation of sects through their representatives. The American colonies had their period of federation, but discovered its weakness and then proceeded to create a real nation. Likewise we are beginning to see that the federation of the sects, however good the work it is doing, and however necessary for the church to pass through this period of evolution, is nevertheless a condition weak and temporary in character. What we need is not a formal federation among the sects through their representatives, but an organized coöperation among the people themselves in every community.

The time has come for the churches to do what the American colonies did when they discovered the weakness of federation. Just as we replaced a group of isolated and rival colonies with a real nation, so we must replace a group of isolated and rival sects with a real church, that is, a community church. To understand

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

clearly the essential nature of a community church, one needs only to remember that the American National Government furnishes the exact model on which it should be organized.

The present condition of the churches is such that we are agreed that something needs to be done, and public opinion is sufficiently enlightened as to perceive what it is that needs to be done. We see clearly that we cannot go back to strictly sectarian churches, and that we cannot stand still. We must go forward to a community type of church. We see what needs to be done. How to do it is the difficult thing. The chief difficulty encountered by any good movement is not theoretical, but practical. The shrewd Portia said to the winsome Nerissa, "If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces." Nevertheless, we usually can get what we want if we want it enough. The thing of first importance is to see clearly where we want to go. The next thing is to do all our walking in that direction. Difficulty does not baffle a normal man, it inspires him. If a problem is especially difficult the only successful way to handle it is with boldness.

"Tender-handed stroke a nettle,  
And it stings you for your pains:  
Grasp it like a man of mettle,  
And it soft as silk remains."

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

This fact of experience leads me to think that the only way to start a community church is to start it. Sectarian lines are erased by the feet of those who cross them. There are two methods by which to proceed: either transform sectarian churches into community churches, or organize community churches as new enterprises.

If we want to get anywhere, we ought to start from where we are. It is always wise to start with the church as it is, and at least give it the chance to accept moral reform. If it will accept it, there is great gain in time and money. Speaking by and large, I think it is idle to hope that the churches will now accept moral reform. But even so we ought to give them the opportunity. I acted on this policy with reference to my own church. In attempting to lead it toward community ideals, I exercised infinite courtesy and patience. I never went so far as to propose any plans of reorganization. I merely preached the Christian ideals. The reaction my church made is highly significant. Some of the pious people spread trivial and ugly slander. Some of the rich men used the only weapon they have—much faith in; they withdrew their financial support. A large number of men believed in the new ideals, but were afraid to stand by them, and were bribed to forsake them. One pronounced supporter of the new ideals was approached by a rich trustee, and offered a loan

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

of twenty thousand dollars with which to build a house. Another man of the same type was told by the president of the board of trustees, who was also president of the bank, that he could get from the bank all the money he needed to use in his business. To use a bank's credit for private purposes is not at all an unusual occurrence. One of the most liberal-minded officers of the church was involved in large financial operations with the president of the board of trustees, and had received large favors from him. What could these men do? While expressing to me in private their sincere devotion to the ideals for which I stood, they confessed they were tied hands and feet and could do nothing to help realize the reforms. One man said that if he did, the treatment he would receive from a small group in the church would be so ugly that he would be compelled to sell his house and leave the town. The result was that the group of "pious" and "respectable" gentlemen who had for so long injured the church by their domination of it through the power of dogma, money, and sectarianism, and who had been dislodged from office to the secret delight of the people, were permitted by the people to get themselves reelected to office and to reinstall the same injurious policies. The attempt at reform failed through lack of courage.

For the same reason the average minister can

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

be just as little relied upon as a leader in the moral reform of the church. The minister is both a product and a cause of the church's condition. His point of view is first of all formed by the church and he in turn helps to perpetuate it. He does not so much deserve censure as he needs liberation. He has given hostages to fortune. He has a wife and children and only a small daily wage. If he were a young, unmarried man, he might make the venture of faith. But to risk losing the means of supporting wife and child seriously conflicts with his obligations of chivalry. The average minister and layman would heartily welcome reforms, but they will not risk the attempt to achieve them. The reason why men in the church can be bought with offers of social and financial benefits is because men in the church, as everywhere else, are for sale. I am not blaming the men who are unable or unwilling to pay the price which moral leadership demands. I sympathize with them. I am merely stating the facts as they are, to indicate that the attempt to reform the church from the inside is futile. I have tried it. Of course, I am basing my conclusion chiefly on my own experience, but I think I very much underestimate the case when I say that this is typical of what would happen in the average church, because my church is far more liberal than the average church. "Uncle Henry" Wal-

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

lace once said to me that he believed he could split his sect from top to bottom, if he would go to its General Assembly and propose to change just four words in its creed — *any four*. If a minister wanted to start a community type of church in order the better to serve the interests of the Kingdom of God, and should propose to the three or four sectarian churches of his community that they change their creeds and constitutions to make possible this result, there is little doubt but that he would have on his hands a discussion and an ugly contest, which would cripple his own and [the community's spiritual life for many years to come. The churches are so enslaved by old traditions and by vested interests, and so blighted by professionalism, that the attempt to reform them from the inside is futile. If any other minister desires to try it as I have done, all I can say is that I wish him joy in the attempt.

There is a more excellent way. It is my conviction that the churches will ultimately evolve from sectarian into community churches. They will do it when they are compelled to, and not before. The compelling force will be the pressure of public opinion from the outside. Therefore, I conclude that the effective way to bring this pressure to bear is to organize community churches as new enterprises. It is the testimony of history that the churches have almost never

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

been reformed from the inside, but only by pressure from the outside. Jesus attempted moral reforms inside the church of his day until it expelled him. Then He went outside to work for the Kingdom of God, and out of his work was born a new church. He stated the philosophical justification for his policy in words which elevate it to a universal principle. He said: 'No one tears a piece from a new garment to mend an old one. Otherwise he would not only spoil the new, but the patch put on would tear away from it — the new from the old — and a worse hole would be made. Nor does any one pour new wine into old wine skins. Otherwise the new wine would burst the skins, the wine itself would be spilt, and the skins be destroyed. New wine needs fresh skins.'

The slow and painful evolution of the church is marked by three formative and decisive ideals of its mission. The first is the theological-individual conception, a plan to save the individual out of the world and secure safety for him in the next by means of theological beliefs or ritualistic performances. The second is the moral-individual conception, according to which it is maintained that, while the aim is to save the individual, this is to be achieved not on theological but on moral grounds, and that education for moral character is the chief fact to be stressed. The third is the moral-social concep-

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

tion, the conviction not only that salvation is character, but that character is a by-product of service, that the business of the church is to work for social justice, for the establishment of the kingdom of God, the normal order of human society, and that the individual's character and happiness in this world and his safety in any other are determined by the part he plays in this enterprise, or in the words of such a prophet of the new order as Whittier, who said, "Heaven's gate is closed to him who comes alone."

It will be observed that while the transition from the first to the second of these positions marks a real and important advance, yet the third position, into which we have only recently begun to enter, is marked off from the first two by a radical and constructive difference. It ushers in a new order of things, so that Dr. John Haynes Holmes is justified in saying, as he does in a recent article that:

"It is the extension of 'applied religion' from charity for the individual to justice in the social order that constitutes the great spiritual discovery of our time. The churches now see the social implications of their task; and their response marks the opening of a new period of Christian history."

The new wine manifestly calls for new bottles. Unescapable is the necessity that the churches be reorganized on the new basis de-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

manded by the new formative idea dominant to-day. The new type of church required by the new idea is none other than a community church.

The justification for applying this principle of Jesus to the church of to-day, of course, rests on two assumptions: first, that the church is an old wine skin; second, that we possess a new wine too vital to be contained in the old skins. These two assumptions I believe to be facts. The new wine is the religion of democracy, which is the religion of Jesus newly discovered. That the churches are old wine skins which the new wine would burst, may be readily discovered by any minister, if he will venture to preach the religion of democracy. Most of them who have made the attempt have split the church, or left it, or given up the task as hopeless and adopted "safety first" as their policy. I have no objection to the destruction of old wine skins. What distresses me is the prospect of losing the new wine which is most precious.

For this reason I believe the better way is for the men and women, who have discovered the religion of democracy, to leave the churches as soon as they discover them to be old skins. One of the strongest members of President Wilson's Cabinet, speaking out of a long and wide experience, told me recently that when he was through with his present position, the thing he wanted

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

most of all to do was to form an association of men who would agree to leave the churches until they acquired enough common sense to serve the common welfare and justify their existence. I replied that, while his plan would undoubtedly render a public service, he did not need so much to persuade men to leave the churches, because that is what they are already doing in large numbers; and that it would be far more helpful if he would persuade those who had left the church to exhibit courage enough to say why they had done so. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." The success of every good cause has always depended on the willingness of its friends to *express* their loyalty to it. If men would not just quietly leave the church, but would be honest with it and give expression to their convictions, the moral reform of the church would be more speedily accomplished. This is why I am now writing the story of my experience with the church. The pressure of public opinion is the most effective weapon of all moral reform. The cure for moral diseases, as of many physical ones, is exposure to the fresh air and sunshine.

But a normal man cannot be content to remain in the negative attitude of protest and destructive criticism. Only he can reform who can replace. Therefore, it is not enough to leave the church and not enough to say why he does

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

so. He must have something better to propose in the place of that which he criticizes. The new and better type of church which he ought to assist in starting is the community church. It is usually lonely and dangerous business to start anything new. That is why most men hesitate to try it. But the sentiment for a better type of church is to-day so general that if a few forceful men and women almost anywhere would start a community church, they would doubtless discover that "there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal." And yet bigness is not greatness and numbers do not make a strong church. They frequently weaken it just as Gideon's army was weakened by numbers. The churches to-day would undoubtedly be a bigger asset to the Kingdom of God if they had fewer members than they now have.

It is far better that a small group of forward-looking people should start a community church in a private house. The certificate of incorporation is a simple matter and easy to secure.<sup>1</sup> If such a group would organize and set itself the task of discovering what the Christian religion is, what Jesus stands for, it would be undertaking the first business of any Christian, — a business so fascinating that it would attract

<sup>1</sup> A suggested model of such a certificate, which can be secured in any state, will be found in Appendix C.

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

new members as fast as the church could care for them. The two classes of people who will respond most readily to the ideals of a community church are the literary people and the working-people. The literary man is not handicapped by vested interests, and his culture makes him cosmopolitan in his outlook. The workingman likewise is not blinded by vested interests, and his moral sanity is preserved by first-hand contact with the concrete facts of life. It is not difficult to understand why Carlyle said it was these two classes of men whom he most honored; one furnished food for the body, the other food for the spirit. And yet it is these two classes which are most estranged from the church to-day.

If for no other reason, it is necessary to start a community church as a new enterprise to reach the large groups of people now outside of all churches. Unless the sectarian churches deliberately take the dog-in-the-manger attitude, they ought to rejoice in any plan which aims to reach the people, whom they have failed to reach. To organize it as an independent enterprise would thus avoid a needless conflict. It is highly probable that an attempt to convert a sectarian into a community church would occasion an ugly display of temper, especially on the part of the "pious" people, which would seriously injure the reform at the start. This is

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

one of the chief things it must shun, for a community church aims to represent the Christian spirit of brotherhood and good will. It contradicts itself, if it begins its career with a sectarian church fight, which is notorious for bitterness. Moreover, in a country like ours the Pharisees and Sadducees also have rights. If these men desire the church to remain forever as it is, and are willing to pay for it, that is their privilege. But there is no law now in America to compel a man either to attend or to support a church whose policies he believes to be morally wrong. The better way is for the forward-looking people to withdraw and form a community church, thus avoiding a useless conflict and showing courtesy even to the Pharisees. Thus the old type of church will be led to follow suit and accept reforms which it would resist if direct force were used. No argument is so convincing as a fact. While we ought strenuously to fight the man whose opposition to reform is due to his selfish interests, we ought to deal patiently with the man who sincerely finds it difficult to understand or accept new ideas.

It seems like a needless waste if a community church does not use a church building we already have. It is. But it needs to be remembered that it is not only rival sectarian prejudices which make the use of these buildings difficult. Many of these buildings are too expensive to

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

maintain, and would thus not only absorb and waste the people's energies, which ought to be given to better things, but also rob the church of intellectual honesty in its teaching, which it now is forced to sell in exchange for income. The very sin which the community church seeks to avoid is the sacrifice of the things of the spirit to material luxuries. The real success of a community church will depend on its ability to practice the principle stated by Epictetus when he said: "Neither is a horse elated nor proud of his manger and trappings and coverings, nor a bird of his little shreds of cloth or his nest; but both of them are proud of their swiftness; one proud of the swiftness of the feet and the other of the wings. Do you also, then, not be greatly proud of your food and dress, and in short of any external things, but be proud of your integrity and good deeds."

If a community church can keep itself free from the greed for big buildings, big incomes, big audiences; if it has the courage to believe that the strength of an army is not in its uniform or brass bands, but in the quality of its soldiers; if it will set its heart not on any external trappings, but on character and intelligence,—then the value of its contribution to the Kingdom of God will be assured. Blessed, indeed, is that church which dares to be poor. It is safe to depend on the judgment of Jesus. The

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

great contributions to the world's art, music, science, and literature have almost invariably come from poor men. The same is true of churches, and for the same reason. Then, too, many of the church buildings misrepresent the religion of democracy. They are gloomy and forbidding, as if a dominant note of the Christian religion were sadness, whereas it is quite the contrary. In the Sermon on the Mount, which contains the great statement of his ideals, Jesus placed the Beatitudes first. The first word in each Beatitude is the word "happy." Jesus put joy in the forefront of his teaching; the church has put it into the background. In few respects has the church more signally misrepresented the Christian religion, and church buildings largely embody this misrepresentation.

Moreover, the typical church building of today is unfitted and unequipped to do the kind of work which needs to be done for a community. It is not only the number and arrangement of rooms, but the type of them, and the use to which they are put. The difference between the typical church building, which is destined to pass, and the new community type of building, is like the difference between the old-fashioned parlor and the modern living-room in our homes: the old-fashioned parlor, with its musty atmosphere; its blinds drawn lest God's sunlight might fade the flowers in the Brussels carpet; the

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

haircloth furniture including six straight-backed, uncomfortable chairs all arranged in deadly precision; the marble-topped center table, on which rested the photograph album and the fifty-pound family Bible with gilt hasps, "designed to withhold the unsearchable riches from the unworthy"; a room too nice to use except on state occasions, such as funerals, or when the minister remained overnight and conducted "family worship" around the big Bible before breakfast. This room has almost passed away, replaced by the modern living-room, spacious, sunlit, ventilated, with its furniture arranged both for use and beauty; and above all, with its open fireplace, the comforter and companion of man, the altar of the family circle whose mystic voices speak wise and beautiful words,— a room for the free laughter of girls and boys, a place of tender memories, cheerful faces, joyous daily activities. The evolution from the old-fashioned parlor to the modern living-room is the kind of transformation which must be effected in the church building, in its type, its spirit, and its uses. New wine needs fresh wine skins. The religion of democracy requires a new type of architecture. The community church will produce a democratic building.

To whatever extent it may be possible to use or improve sectarian churches in the process of transforming them into community churches,

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

nevertheless, it will be necessary everywhere to start community churches as independent enterprises in order to fix the standard and exhibit the type as it ought to be.<sup>1</sup> In any attempt to make improvements in sectarian churches as they are, the chief danger is that the religion of democracy will be so compromised and de-vitalized that it will emerge from the process a harmless and useless thing. Unless the community church is radically different and radically better than the typical sectarian church, it will hardly be worth while to waste time in organizing it. ‘Unless your righteousness,’ said Jesus, in reference to a similar situation, ‘greatly surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not find entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven’; that is, into normal human society. In other words, unless it is radically better, it will not be the religion of democracy at all. This is the chief difficulty in the way of reform in the churches, because their main policy of procedure is compromise. Charles Ferguson says there are pious politicians who would trade off the law of gravitation for the sake of getting everybody to agree. Out of a large experience, I warn any man who attempts the reform of the church to beware of this danger. It is not only its negative character, but the

<sup>1</sup> A suggested statement to be used in the promotion of community churches will be found in Appendix B.

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

sinister motives back of the policy. These pious gentlemen will pretend to agree with the religion of democracy and then by subtle means proceed to sap it of its vitality. If a minister preaches the religion of democracy, these gentlemen do not dare to attack him on the merits of the question. They attack him personally. They do not even make this attack directly. They are too clever to make such a blunder. They call a meeting of the church officers to consider the *spiritual welfare* of the church, over which they are piously concerned. The only consolation to be found in this contemptible process is its humor. The pious solemnity of these men is rich comedy in the dishonest and hypocritical game they play. It is like the dramatic comedy of the High Priest Annas, when he tore his priestly robe to show how much he had been contaminated by the words of Jesus, while at the same time, contrary to the law, he was gathering data to be used against him in his forthcoming judicial murder. It is the same game of humorous hypocrisy which is played wherever vested interests are at stake. William G. Sumner calls attention to the fact that "interests dominate modern politics, but always more or less secretly, because it is not admitted to be right that they should dominate. Hence another pretext must be put forward to cover the interest. The best pretext is always an abstruse

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

doctrine in the theory of public welfare. A protective tariff is never advocated because it will enable some citizens to win wealth by taxing others; it is always advocated as a prosperity policy for the country. Henry C. Carey elevated a protective tariff to a philosophy of society. When the New York courts held a law to be valid which forbade a saloon to be licensed within two hundred feet of a schoolhouse, the saloon-keepers attacked the schools as a nuisance detrimental to property." It is for this reason that the churches have everywhere yielded to soft compromises, and compromise is the big obstacle to moral reforms in the churches. The present condition of the churches is clearly indicated by the story of the man who had a chameleon for a pet. He would put the little reptile on a piece of yellow cloth and it would turn yellow; on a piece of red cloth and it would turn red; on a piece of green cloth and it would turn green. In an unfortunate moment somebody suggested putting the versatile little creature on a piece of Scotch plaid. The result was that the chameleon burst all to pieces trying to make good. Likewise the church, in its attempt to accommodate itself to all kinds of opinions and no opinions at all, has so softened, distorted, and compromised the Christian religion that the church has lost its life and sold its soul for material prosperity.

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

I emphasize this fact not only because it explains why the churches are failing to appeal to large numbers of sincere and thoughtful men and women, but also because it is the peculiar weakness in the attempts now being made to cure sectarianism by plans for the formal federation of the churches. It has been truly said that "the attempt to unify the churches by soft diplomacies and compromises, the search for a minimum creed to meet the requirements of the most attenuated mind, the letting go of the fact, by which the people must live or die, for the sake of sociability — all this is one of the pitifullest spectacles that these times present."

It is this negative suicidal policy which the type of community church such as I am here proposing seeks primarily to avoid. Its policy is quite the contrary. It aims to discover, not how little it can believe, but how much. It does not seek to please all by agreeing with them, but seeks to please them by being honest, open-minded, and sweet-spirited. It pays human nature the compliment of supposing that the majority of men and women admire honesty. It does not desire uniformity, but unity. Its chief formative principle is that it is organized, not on the basis of agreement, but on the basis of difference, the liberty of difference. It assumes that Christian men ought to be gentlemen enough to differ in opinion without differing in

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

feeling and intelligent enough to want to learn from those who differ from them. It removes from its members the temptation to persecute each other, by affording to all the opportunity to express their own convictions. It does not believe that, in order to be tolerant, a man must have no convictions. On the contrary, it believes that tolerance has no meaning apart from strong convictions, for otherwise there would be nothing to be tolerant about. But its attitude is far more Christian than that of tolerance, which contains a spirit of condescension. Its attitude is that of appreciation. The members of a family do not tolerate each other. Love leads them to appreciate each other, to respect each other's personality, and to grant liberty of opinion and liberty in its expression.

By making these principles the basis of its organization, the community church opens the door for the operation of a positive constructive policy. It provides the way by which it can even dare to discuss and preach the ideals of Jesus. It is free to address itself to the great moral needs and religious issues of our day, such as Industrial Democracy, International Peace, and a Scientific Religion; that is, one which has a reverence and passion for the material and spiritual facts of life as God made them. Because the community church is organized democratically, it will be free to deal with social evils from

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

a statesmanlike point of view. Its method will be prevention rather than cure. It believes in Red Cross work and will do its share; but it will never be content with Red Cross work alone, because there is something better than Red Cross work. Rather than bind up the after-battle wounds and mend men so that they may be wounded again, it is better and saner to work for the prevention of the battles which cause the wounds and make Red Cross work necessary. The test of sanity used in some asylums is to lead a patient to a trough partially filled with water and into which an open spigot is pouring new supplies. The patient is asked to bail the water out of the trough with a tin vessel. If he attempts to do so without first turning off the flow, he is judged to be insane, and the judgment is no doubt correct. Likewise in dealing with such evils as the two greatest scourges of our time, war and poverty, the community church believes that moral sanity demands that it shall attempt to remove the causes of these evils rather than content itself with ameliorating their effects. Its method of work is to turn off the spigot. The community church believes that it is not possible to purify the water in a well by painting the pump. The reason why so many ministers feel a distressing lack of reality in their work is because so much of their energy has been spent in painting the pump.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

By adopting an honest, aggressive, constructive policy, the community church seeks to accentuate the resemblances among men, and not their differences, and thus secure unity of feeling and concert of action. The great moral blunder of sectarian churches is their accentuation of the differences among men. To make this blunder, they necessarily had to accentuate unimportant details; they had to fish up side streams. The principles peculiar to any sect are not the principles of importance. The things which separate the sects are the things of least importance; they are details. There can be no real unity among Christians unless we broaden the basis of unity to include the resemblances. If we inquire what these are, we are brought face to face with those fundamental economic, social, and spiritual needs which are common to men just because they are men, not because they belong to any sect. We shall likewise discover that these needs are the Christian ideals which Jesus presented in his inaugural address. If, then, we seek to unite men on the basis of their resemblances, our method must be not to decrease the things we believe, but to increase them; not to adopt a weak, negative programme, but a strong, positive one; not to minimize the differences, but to magnify the resemblances; for the essence of religion is to regard big things as big and little things as little, and to act on this

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

principle. This is what the community church aims to do. Our mistake has been that we have been attempting to unite the sects as such. It is an impossible task, and hardly worth while even if accomplished. What is both possible and desirable is to unite individuals on the basis of their needs and aspirations, because they are uniting on something really worth while. If men agree on the big things they ought to fight for, it is relatively unimportant that they should agree as to the kind of uniform they wear, even if you could persuade them to agree, which is highly improbable.

There are two railroads which operate passenger trains between the beautiful Union Station at Washington, D.C., and New York City. It would be both comic and tragic folly if these trains were held up so that the conductors from the back platforms could harangue the people on the relative merits of their respective trains, while the people endeavored to entice and persuade each other to leave one train for another, each group exalting the merits of its chosen train by depreciating and slandering its rival. The decisive fact to keep clearly in mind, the thing about which it is essential that all should agree, is that either of the two trains would carry them safely to New York. Men can agree on their goal, but not on their starting-point. It is a question of taste as to which train a

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

man takes; but this fact did not prevent the railroads from using wisdom enough to build the Union Station, thus saving money and energy both for themselves and the people, and all enjoying a common service which no one of them alone could have afforded. Its working principle is unity in essentials, in non-essentials liberty.

It is commonly asserted that just as the choice of a train is a matter of taste, so is the choice of a sect, and therefore that it is a deeper question than intellectual agreement, and that this constitutes the chief obstacle to any vital unity among the sects, because "with tastes there is no argument." This is unfortunately true, and it is the most serious indictment which lies against the churches. The sects have reduced religion to a mere matter of taste, whereas religion is a matter of life or death; it is universal as the sunshine and quite as essential to human well-being. Details are a matter of taste, but religion is not; it is a matter of universal necessity like the air and sunshine. The sects have blighted religion with professionalism, the essence of which is to care more for the manner in which a thing is done than for the thing itself. The psychology used to support the position that religion is a matter of taste is false to the facts of life. The sectarian churches may be correctly classified into three general types: the

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

intellectual, the emotional, and the æsthetic — those which make their dominant religious appeal to the intellect or to the emotions or to the love of beautiful forms. Which type of church a man chooses, it is said, depends on whether he wishes to make his religious expression through the intellect or emotions or love of beauty. This division of man into separate compartments is superficial and mechanical psychology and has no basis in fact. It is merely an academic process for convenience in discussion. In every important act of a man's life, the intellect, emotions, and will are intermingled. These terms serve only to indicate a distinction in function, but in practice they are a unity. They are riveted together. What God has joined together the sects ought not to put asunder.

It is precisely this injury to human welfare which the community church aims to prevent. I refuse to be dissected. I require a church which ministers to all three sides of my nature; not to a piece of me, but to the whole of me. Every normal man has a desire for knowledge, is controlled by his emotions, and has a hunger for beauty. The community church aims chiefly to meet such universal needs and to minister to a whole man. Its central idea is expressed in the Greek word "logos," balance, proportion, a term which came to designate the incarnate Word of Religion and has furnished modern languages

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

with "logic," the name for the Science of Reason. It is the word for a rational life. We shall one day understand that a community church is the only rational type of church to represent a religion whose founder is best described by the term "logos"—a balanced proportion. The method of the community church is like the method used in taking a composite photograph. It aims only at fundamental agreements. A composite picture can be made only through agreements. Every feature which does not agree with the other features leaves so slight an impression on the plate that it cannot be seen. But every feature which is common to many faces will be clear and positive. This means that a composite picture is more ideal than any single face that has gone into the making of it. The community church aims to make a composite picture of the sects, combining the finest traits in each, preserving their fundamental agreements, that they may be made to stand out clear and positive, and their impression on the community be made inspiring.

This, then, is a community church as I conceive it ought to be; a church organized democratically, free from the domination of dogma, money, and sectarianism, aiming to decrease the number of sects by the process of absorption and welding; a church which stands for a dynamic, not a static religion; which represents the

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

things Jesus stood for and nothing else; which believes there can be no such thing as moral neutrality; which aims to win and hold men, not by decreasing the content of faith, but by increasing it; which believes it is unnecessary to compromise and soften down the sunshine to make it more acceptable; which is organized on the liberty of difference and on agreement only as regards purposes, not methods; which believes that the intellect divides men, but that the heart unites them; which recognizes no difference between the secular and the sacred; which believes that Christianity has been captured and needs to be liberated; which accentuates the resemblances among men by enlarging the basis of unity; which works for prevention rather than cure; which believes that appreciation is better than tolerance; which believes in organized coöperation in behalf of the religion of democracy. Its fitting symbol is the sun-dial. If a sun-dial could talk, Charles Lamb said it would say, "I count only those hours which are serene"; that is, it can work only when the sun shines. Its method of marking time is a parable in action, which suggests the wisdom of looking on the bright, not the dark, side of things; of being positive, not negative; of accentuating the resemblances, not the differences; of cultivating our admirations, not our disgusts. For the sake of this parable I once per-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

suaded some young people to erect a beautiful spherical sun-dial on the lawn of my church. But a sun-dial on the lawn of a sectarian church is a contradiction, which will be removed only when it ceases to be a sectarian and becomes a community church.

When the churches will respond to this ideal I do not know. That they will respond to it, in the near future, is my firmest conviction. It usually takes at least the period of a generation to effect a fundamental reform. When Moses became the leader of an industrial revolution and led a race of working-men out into freedom, why was it that he consumed forty years in making a journey which he could easily have made in three weeks? The reason is obvious, and is clearly stated in the record of the movement. He had to give all the old people a chance to die. The youth responded to the new ideals, and out of them he created the Hebrew Republic. But to-day in America so many of us have discovered that youth is a state of mind, and coöperation is so universally practiced, that I judge we shall not have to wait for a generation for this reform. In a multitude of social, civic, and philanthropic activities, people of all classes are working side by side, coming to know and therefore to like each other. In the colleges the youth work and worship together, and receive a distinct shock when they return to the narrow

## AN AMERICAN PRODUCT

sectarian churches of their home town. The children of all sects, over twenty million of them, coöperate in the greatest of our institutions, the public school. Indeed, the spirit of democracy has become so dominant that many men and women now feel that they not only ought not to apologize for absenting themselves from the churches, but that they are doing wrong to attend them and shut themselves off from their neighbors by sectarian barriers. For these reasons, the time has come when it will not be possible much longer to resist the logic of the question; since we are now coöoperating as neighbors and friends in almost all other lines of social activities, why should we not do so in church activities? The golden age of the church lies before and not behind it, if it will honestly answer this repeated and persistent question. I believe the community church is the only worth-while answer.

But is not the term "church" too limited to represent our growing democratic ideals? Does not the term "a community church" contain a contradiction and anticlimax? The churches themselves are already beginning to apologize for their name. When a church advertises itself as "*the friendly church*," does it mean that the term "church" has acquired such a bad flavor as no longer to suggest the idea of friendliness, and that this particular church, contrary to

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

what you might expect, is indeed friendly? Is there any other institution which can better serve the religion of democracy? The consideration of this question is the subject of the next chapter.

## VII

### 'THE AMERICAN CHURCH: A COMMUNITY CENTER

*The American people have a certain passion as strong as their mastery of materials, and the “little red schoolhouse” has stood in our imagination, not so much a thing of utilitarian value as a thing of spiritual significance — a homely, thrilling symbol of the conquest of matter by mind, the victorious march of the creative spirit of man across the deserts and wildernesses of the world. The schoolhouse has served as the church of the religion of democracy, the shrine of our secret but sincere devotion.... And there is not a schoolhouse in the republic but is destined to become a university of the people.*

CHARLES FERGUSON

## VII

### THE AMERICAN CHURCH: A COMMUNITY CENTER

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, who had planned to lead an ideal community to the banks of the Susquehanna in President Washington's second administration, said in 1833, concerning America's experiment in democracy: "The Union will be shaken almost to dislocation whenever any serious question between the States arises. The American Union has no center, and it is impossible now to make one. The more they extend their borders into the Indian's land, the weaker will the national cohesion be. But I look upon the States as splendid masses, to be used by and by in the composition of two or three great governments." All lovers of democracy, when they remember how brief has been the life of republics, and in view of the fact that ours has existed less than one hundred and fifty years, may well share Coleridge's feeling of anxiety for its future.

In the not distant past it was the noticeable habit of Americans to indulge in unseemly boasting about their country, especially about its

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

size. This spirit of boyish levity may easily be misinterpreted by those who do not understand the quality of American humor. The American so heartily believes in his country and its future that he is not ashamed to say so, and in saying so he feels that he can afford to be light-hearted about it. This is the philosophy of his fun. It is a sign, not that his love of country is shallow, but just the opposite. It is so profound that he permits himself to play only about its surface, but deep down in his heart there is a proud, passionate conviction that his country has undertaken the most significant enterprise in history and is trying a great democratic experiment, the outcome of which is the deepest concern to mankind. "Pick," said Kipling, "an American of the second generation anywhere you please, from the cab-rank, the porter's room, or the plow-tail, especially the plow-tail, and that man will make you understand in five minutes that he understands what manner of thing the Republic is."

In view of the characteristic American habit to brush aside danger with a laugh and to touch with a light hand his serious convictions, it becomes highly significant to notice that recently he has abandoned his confident, playful tone and grown serious about his country's welfare. And while it is true that most Americans would be willing to admit that their country

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

contains elements about which they are justified in boasting, they have for the most part ceased to boast about its size. The very bigness about which he once boasted became a source of anxiety. He came to see not only that bigness is not greatness, but also that it may be an element of weakness. And yet the real ground of his anxiety is not the ground on which Coleridge based his reluctant prophecy. For that problem has been largely solved. Indeed, before Coleridge's anxiety found utterance, certain physical inventions were made which removed the danger of which he spoke. Robert Fulton's steamboat, the Clermont, in 1807, was the first success of the kind after a century of experiments. The steamboat converted the rivers and lakes of America into highways for cheap and rapid transit. It brought the country physically together. Then followed Robert Stephenson's locomotive the Rocket, in 1830, which in America immediately superseded all other modes of land travel, bound ocean to ocean, and enabled the Government to make its authority tangible in every section of the country. In 1844, Samuel Morse's electric telegraph became a success after many experiments. This invention brought every center of population into almost immediate communication with the seat of government, making it possible to follow the course of events as closely as in the streets of Washington.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

To-day two other inventions, until very recently regarded as playthings, the wireless and the flying machine, are bringing not only distant sections of the country physically close together, but all parts of the world as well.

These inventions have solved the problem of maintaining a government over an area of three millions of square miles. The physical unity of the country has been achieved. The real cause of the thoughtful American's present anxiety is his realization that it is possible to have physical unity and at the same time to have spiritual disunity. Neighborhood may be a menace, unless we are assured of the desirable character of the neighbors. It is a risky thing to be close to people unless we know the kind of people we are close to. Two men may live on the same street and yet be miles apart in their ideals and purposes. What disturbs us is the fact that everywhere men and women are divided into classes according to their personal tastes or self-interest. There are social clubs, sectarian divisions, partisan groups. There are women's clubs, labor unions, capitalistic federations. There are racial antagonisms, class hatreds, deep social cleavages and misunderstandings, dissimilarities of mind and purpose. It is this condition, this lack of public-mindedness, this lack of social sympathy and mutual understanding, which we have come to regard as a

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

serious menace to our experiment in democracy and which will guarantee its failure if unchecked. Our present urgent task is to discover some means of welding citizens together in social and economic sympathy, of transforming America into a community. For, as Professor Giddings says, "the primary purpose of the State is to perfect social integration." Social integration can be achieved not by physical but by spiritual means, for a nation is *the will* to be one people. "The Kingdom of Heaven is *within* you." So is the American Republic. A nation is a state of mind. How shall this welding process be effected?

Just as the need for an instrument to weld the country into a spiritual unity has become acutely felt, a discovery has been made to meet the need. We have discovered that we had, ready made to our hand, one instrument fitted to our purpose, and one instrument alone. It is the Free Public School system. Like all great discoveries the community use of the schoolhouse grew out of a conscious and profound need. Rauschenbusch calls the appropriation of the schoolhouse for more varied purposes a master-stroke of the new democracy. It is the only democratic institution existing in America, non-sectarian, non-partisan, and non-exclusive. It furnishes the only platform on which *all* the people can meet. It is our foremost industry

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

from whatever standpoint it is regarded, with its 22,000,000 girls and boys, 600,000 school teachers, 277,000 school buildings, \$1,347,000,-000 invested in property, and \$750,000,000 annually spent for its support. It is the most American institution, the greatest American invention, and the most successful social enterprise yet undertaken by any nation.

Nevertheless, its golden age lies before it, not behind it. It is now entering upon a new era in its already notable history, an era which will witness its vastly increased usefulness to our experiment in democracy, an experiment which depends for its success more on the free public school than upon any other single factor. Hitherto it has been used chiefly for children; it has been used less than half-time; it has yielded an inadequate return on our investment; it has been used eight or nine months of the year instead of twelve, five days of the week instead of seven, five hours a day instead of ten. Our discovery is not merely that we ought to be getting the worth of our money invested in these buildings, which belong to all the people and not to the school boards, but what is far more important, that they ought to be used by three classes of people and not only by one class. They ought to be used by adults and youths as well as by children. They ought to be the people's clubhouses, a people's university. "Our

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

greatest national need," says David Starr Jordan, "is a national university for the training of grown men and women." The public school used as a community center is the answer to this national need.

If this need is to be met, the first necessity is that men and women shall be assisted to discover the schoolhouse; I mean to discover its new uses and possibilities as an agency for organized self-help and organized community coöperation. It is not an easy discovery to make. The acceptance of new ideas often requires a surgical operation and sometimes even such an operation is unavailing. In Victor Hugo's great novel, "Les Misérables," an officer of the law is described, who once encountered a new principle which conflicted with his previous and fixed theory of life. When he could not adjust himself to the new discovery, he committed suicide, which event illustrates a fact of common knowledge, namely, that a few first-class funerals in every community once in so often are an essential condition of progress. The world must depend on funerals for its progress until we find some method of preserving the spirit of youth, the essence of which is hospitality to new ideas.

To accept a new idea is at the best a painful process, but the discovery of the new uses of the schoolhouse is made doubly difficult because

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

of our familiarity with it. For we are most blind to the real significance of the commonplace. It is with the schoolhouse as it is with "Robinson Crusoe." If any group of average men were asked whether they knew "Robinson Crusoe," each one would indignantly answer, "Why, of course; did I not read it when I was a boy?" This answer is the best evidence that the question is pertinent. For the man who has not read "Robinson Crusoe" since he was a boy does not know it. As a boy he only read the first part and that was an edition expurgated of all its philosophy. He has the impression that it is a story written for boys, whereas it was written not for boys, but for men, and it is one of the most serious and philosophical books in print. As our familiarity with "Crusoe" when children has blinded us to its real significance, so our familiarity with the schoolhouse as children makes it difficult for us to discover its community use by adults.

It is possible to look at a thing twenty times without seeing it, and on the twenty-first look really to see it for the first time. There is a sure test by which one may know whether he has seen the schoolhouse in its new light. When he once sees it, he must make to it a motor reaction. He must do something about it. It is not mere knowledge which he acquires; it is *felt* knowledge, which is a very different thing. It

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

is like the experience of a certain little girl whose brother had set a trap for birds. When she protested to her mother, the mother asked her whether she had done anything in regard to it. "Yes," she replied; "I prayed that the trap would not work." "That is well," said the mother; "did you do anything else?" "Yes; I prayed that God would keep the birds out of the trap." "That is well; did you do anything else?" "Yes," said the girl; "then I kicked the trap all to pieces." This is a motor response due to her intensity of feeling on the subject. Such felt knowledge concerning the new use of the schoolhouse is now being acquired by forward-looking people, and it is seen to be so sane, so practicable, and also so necessary if our democracy is not to suffer shipwreck, that it is only a question of time when, in spite of strenuous opposition by certain classes of people and from vested interests, the schoolhouse will become the capital building in every community.

During the last part of the last century, under the influence of the Herbartian conception of education, psychology was the dominant interest among educators. It was self-centered, introspective. Questions of method bulked large. Character-building was accepted as the aim of education. Since the beginning of the century, under the influence of an awakened social conscience, we have begun to see that character is

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

a by-product of service; that the school ought to teach not subjects, but children; that the aim of education is to fit girls and boys to play their part in human relationship. The revolution which has taken place in our thought is that we have begun to regard the schoolhouse, not as a mediæval type of house with the court on the inside, but as a modern type of house with the veranda on the outside in full view of the highway where the race of men go by, whose needs it is the school's high calling and privilege to meet. The logic of this new ideal is irresistible. It is only a step from it to the conception of education as a life process, and, in this process, to the conception of the schoolhouse as the people's university.

What does the community use of the schoolhouse mean? In attempting to state in brief a subject so big, one must needs have what the poet Keats calls "negative capabilities." He must know what to leave in the inkstand, what to leave unsaid. A bird's-eye view of the facts may be had if we group them under the use of the schoolhouse as a community capitol, a community forum, and a neighborhood club.

The schoolhouse as the community capitol obviously means that it shall be used as the polling-place. It ought to be so used for economic reasons alone. Why should we rent special buildings, when we already own school-

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

houses conveniently located in every district? If voting precincts, so far as possible, were made identical with school districts, if the school-houses were used as polling-places, if the election machinery were simplified, and if school teachers were employed as election officers, because they have the required intelligence and are already public officials, every state in the Union would save many thousands of dollars annually. But we ought to use the schoolhouse as the polling-place, not only for economic reasons, which is of the least importance, but especially for the sake of the ideal which the ballot-box represents. It is the symbol of our membership in America. It is a sacred symbol. During the last campaign candidate Hughes voted in a laundry in New York City, and President Wilson voted in a fire house in Princeton. Barber shops, livery stables, any old place, is regarded as good enough for voting purposes. Is such a place fitting in which to exercise the highest duty and function of American citizenship? The ballot-box is our Ark of the Covenant, and just as the Ark of the Covenant, which was the symbol of the Hebrew Republic, was given a place in the Holy of Holies in the national temple, so our ballot-box ought to be given a place befitting its importance. The one fitting place for it is the public school, which is the temple of our democracy.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

The ballot-box and voting-booth ought to be made decorative and kept permanently in the schoolhouse, because of the permanent ideal which they embody. It would help to make vivid the function of the school. "The walls of Sparta are built of Spartans," sang an old poet. The walls of America are built of Americans, and the public school is the factory in which they are produced. The public school's function is to make, not merely good men and women, but good citizens for the Republic. The great need of our American democracy is that in every school district the public school should be developed into a worthy university of the people, which shall confer citizenship as a degree upon those who in this school shall have made themselves fit to receive it. As soon as we put this fact in the foreground, we set in operation a formative principle whose effect on the school will be reforming and vitalizing; because we shall be compelled to ask the further questions — What kind of studies ought the curriculum to contain? What kind of studies are most worth while in the process of making citizens? The three unsettled questions which the schools are always debating are the content of the curriculum, the method of teaching, and business management. The new question concerning the use of the schoolhouse as the community capitol will shed more illumination on

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

these three problems than anything else has yet done. It will insure a wise solution of them. It will wed the processes of the school to patriotism and to practical human needs. It will save the school from the blight of professionalism, which is its most deadly enemy. This fact can best be stated in brief by employing an illustration.

It has ever afforded much interesting speculation and much amusement to ask and discuss the question, What would modern educational experts have made of Lincoln, if, as a baby, he had been put in their care? "They would have started him on sterilized milk, clothed him in disinfected garments, sent him to kindergarten, where he would have learned to weave straw mats and sing about the 'Bluebird on the Branch.' Then the dentist would have straightened his teeth, the oculist would have fitted him with glasses, and in the primary grades he would have been taught by pictures and diagrams the difference between a cow and a pig, and through nature study he would have learned that the catbird did not lay kittens. By the time he was eight he would have become a 'young gentleman'; at ten, he would have known more than the old folks at home; at twelve or fourteen, he would have taken up manual training, and within two years have made a rolling-pin and tied it with a blue ribbon. In the high school at sixteen, where he would have learned in four

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

years that Mars was the reputed son of Juno, and to recite a stanza from the 'Lady of the Lake.' Then to college, where he would have joined the glee club and a Greek letter fraternity, smoked cigarettes and graduated, and never have done anybody any harm! Well, perhaps we don't know, and can't tell what might have been, but we can't help feeling thankful that Lincoln's training and education were left to Nancy Hanks — and God."

To give the ballot-box an honored place in the school as the symbol of its chief function, to wed the school to patriotism, will keep its processes sane, and in turn will help to purify politics. Our purpose is not to bring politics into the schools, but to bring the schools into politics, and give to them the commanding influence in public affairs they were designed to exercise.

The use of the schoolhouse as a forum is the next logical step to take after it has been made the community capitol. In every state constitution provision has been made for a capitol building, in which the *representatives* of the people can meet to debate public questions and vote on public policies, but the only place they provide, in which the *people themselves* may meet, is "in a peaceable manner." The humor of this omission would be refreshing, if it were not so serious. "A popular government without

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

popular information or the means of acquiring it," said Madison, "is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." We have adopted universal manhood suffrage in America. This may have been a blunder or it may not. At any rate, it is a fact, and nothing is so convincing as a fact. Inasmuch as there has been placed in the hands of average men, and many average women, the ballot through which public policies are determined and public officials elected, it is of primary importance that a means be provided for the discussion of public questions so that men may educate themselves by going to school to one another and equip themselves to vote intelligently. "For no man has a right to take part in governing others who has not the intelligence or moral capacity to govern himself." This is the practical and philosophical ground on which the necessity for a community forum rests. It is an open meeting conducted by citizens themselves for the discussion of social, political, economic, or any other questions, which concern the common welfare.

"There are two ways to govern a community," said Lord Macaulay in the British Parliament; "one is by the sword, the other is by

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

public opinion." Ours is a government by public opinion. It is obvious that the welfare of a democracy requires that public opinion be informed and educated. The greatest danger to a democracy is that the forces which control public opinion should be corrupted at their source. The pulpit and press are moulders of public opinion, but they are no longer dependable. We must establish public free forums undominated by private interests. If it is right for the state to spend money to provide polling-places, it is just as right, and even more necessary for the state to spend money for forums in which citizens may fit themselves to vote intelligently. In his remarkable book "Physics and Politics," Walter Bagehot devotes a chapter to "Government by Discussion," in which he convincingly demonstrates its essential value to all free governments.

This being the nature and purpose of the forum, it follows that its basic principle must be freedom of thought and freedom in its expression. The forum is organized on the basis of difference, not agreement. It aims not at uniformity, but at unity. It is not only a stupid world, where all think alike, but there can be little or no progress if we listen only to those with whom we agree. It is significant that our word "misunderstanding" has become a synonym for quarrel, whereas most of our quarrels would be

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

found to involve not a fundamental difference, but just a failure to understand each other.

Inasmuch as men who do not agree with each other have to work with each other in life's activities, it is obviously important that they should try to understand each other. The Christian ought to understand the agnostic and the agnostic the Christian; the Roman Catholic the Protestant, and the Protestant the Roman Catholic; the Democrat the Republican, and the Republican the Democrat; the capitalist the laborer, and the laborer the capitalist. These classes usually associate only with members of their own class, and read only their sectarian or partisan newspapers. They are provincial-minded. We are, of course, under no obligation to agree with each other, but as members of America it is our moral and patriotic duty to understand each other. For there is no hope of peace and coöperation in a democracy unless men have the right to think for themselves, unless they agree to disagree agreeably, and unless they try to understand each other.

The forum furnishes the means for mutual understanding. It aims to create public-mindedness. Its success depends on our ability to differ in opinion without differing in feeling. There is no way of acquiring this habit except through practice. The forum invites us to have the courage to be honest, the courtesy to be

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

gentlemen, and to say to our neighbors, just because they are our neighbors, what Paul said to the Christians of the first century, "Therefore, putting aside lying, let us speak truth every man with his neighbor, *for* we are members one of another."

Undoubtedly, where freedom of speech is permitted, there is constant danger that erroneous opinions will be expressed. It is one of the risks which the exercise of liberty necessarily involves. But then it is more dangerous for them not to find expression. Exposure to fresh air is the best cure for mental as well as physical diseases. This freedom furnishes its own antidote to this danger — Jefferson well stated it when he said, "Error of opinion may be tolerated when reason is free to combat it." It is highly important to understand that the right to preach truth is in danger whenever the right to preach error is denied. It ought to be obvious that the right of free speech cannot be maintained, and indeed does not exist, unless we agree to grant *complete* freedom of speech without any censorship whatever and place our dependence on the operation of Jefferson's principle as the civilized method of overcoming error. The truth needs no apologist and no defender; it needs only a free field and no favors. The man who rejects Jefferson's principle is a coward and an atheist. He manifestly does not

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

believe in the power of the very truth he seeks to defend by force; he has no confidence in the God of Truth.

It may frequently happen that the free discussion of vital questions will lead to disturbance. In an open forum, held on a certain Sunday many centuries ago in the village of Nazareth, where laymen were permitted to speak, a young carpenter made some remarks on social and economic justice. The speech caused a disturbance; indeed, the meeting became a mob and this workingman almost lost his life. But there is no man who is acquainted with history, and certainly no Christian, who regrets that the synagogue was organized as a forum and that this particular speech was made on this particular occasion. For the speaker's name was Jesus, and the speech was his inaugural address in a public career more helpful to the world than that of any other man. If there are any who do not wish disturbance, there is only one place, so far as I know, where they can be assured of quiet. It is the graveyard. Wherever there is life, there is growth, and growth means disturbance; especially if it is growth toward democracy and toward a saner and juster social order.

When the people have learned, through the use of the schoolhouse as a polling-place and as a forum, that it belongs to them and not to the school board, they are then prepared to inaugu-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

rate its use as a neighborhood club. It cannot be too carefully noted that the community center is not charity work nor an uplift movement nor a social settlement. It is organized self-help. It is not a patronizing effort to give people what you think they need. Nor is it the cowardly attempt to give people what they want. It is the neighborly desire to assist people to choose what they ought to want. Democracy is the organization of society on the basis of friendship and this is the key to the community center ideal.

When the community use of the schoolhouse has been organized democratically, then we are prepared to undertake all sorts of activities. Some of these activities may be described as *social*, such as community dinners, musical festivals, folk-singing, especially singing, which is the most democratic and most spiritual of all the arts. The object of these activities is to promote a better acquaintance and the spirit of good will. A friend said to Charles Lamb, "Come here, I want to introduce you to Mr. A." Lamb replied, with his characteristic stammer, "No, thank you." "Why not?" "I don't like him." "Don't like him? But you don't *know* him!" "That's the *reason* I don't like him." The community center operates on the conviction that antagonisms among men are destroyed by better acquaintance.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

Some of its activities may be described as *re-creational*, such as dances, games, motion pictures, community dramas, especially the drama, which is "the ritual of the religion of democracy." The object of these activities is to meet the need for play and the hunger for joy, a need every day more keenly felt under the monotonous grind of our machine age. Aside from the necessary relief which play brings, its moral and educational value is as great as that of work, and sometimes greater. The community center proceeds on the assumption that the playground is as important as the schoolroom; that play is re-creation as well as recreation; that it is needed by all alike; and that the leisure problem is as urgent as the labor problem.

Some of these activities may be described as *educational*, such as courses of lectures on scientific and literary subjects, the Americanization of immigrants, a branch library, a savings bank. The object of these activities is mutual aid in self-development, which is one of President Wilson's definitions of democracy. The community center is guided by the principle that education is a life process; that it can be secured only through self-activity; and that it ought to be acquired, not apart from, but through, one's daily vocation. When the people of any community perceive the formative principle that the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

schoolhouse belongs to them and that education is not limited to book learning, then the way is at once opened to the community use of the schoolhouse for any kind of coöperative enterprise designed to meet human needs, provided it is never for profit, but for the common welfare. It is my conviction that the time is not far distant when the schools everywhere will be used, not only to inspire coöperation in buying and selling the necessities of life, but also to direct and operate such enterprises, just as the public schools are now being used in Alaska, under the guidance of the United States Bureau of Education, with patriotic and economic results which are highly gratifying. To use the schoolhouse as a polling-place, a community forum, and a neighborhood club will establish it as the community capitol. These are the three chief activities which this movement aims to promote. I have stated them in their logical order, but this may not always be the chronological order. In our world human processes do not move along logical lines, but along lines of least resistance. Therefore community center work frequently begins with some simple social activity and from this evolves into larger activities. To learn to play together is sometimes a wise preparation for more constructive forms of coöperation.

I may indicate something of the large signi-

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

ficance of the community center movement by three illustrations drawn from three concrete experiences in places where I am now doing some work for the United States Bureau of Education, each of which is typical of an important phase of the work. One is a farm village in New York State. It has completed a community house which I discovered when I went to give the dedication address. The origin of this building is significant of much. Some women in the village church gave a simple amateur play, to satisfy the young people's desire for pleasure and to raise money for the church. When the money was presented to the church officers, they refused it on the ground that it was tainted money. Thus was realized the necessity for a building to meet the obvious needs of the community, which the church refused to meet. Such a building has been built and dedicated free of debt. It conducts dances, games, socials, a library, and provides preaching on Sundays. The community spirit created by it is so fine that the building has been partly endowed. This movement grew out of the church, and is moving toward the school so that it may be under public auspices and have its work properly directed. The issue here is the need to broaden the scope and deepen the content of the term "religion."

The next place is a beautiful suburb of Phila-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

adelphia where there is no church, no school, and no town government, on account of which happy condition of freedom I have told the people they are to be congratulated, because there are so many things they will not have to unlearn and so much dead lumber they will not have to remove. I am trying to persuade this community to build a community school, which will perform all three functions for the people, and especially to make the town government and the school administration one and the same thing, to make the same man both the city manager and the school principal. The issue involved here is the need to redeem the term "politics"; to make it mean not partisan advantage, but social service. The chief means to this end is to wed politics and education.

The third place is a school in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. The principal of this school belongs to the type described in Herbert Quick's "The Brown Mouse," and is doing a fine constructive work. She has a system by which she knows each day why absent students are absent. A common cause was discovered to be the lack of shoes suitable to wear on stormy days. She removed this cause by having the shoes mended by boys in the manual-training department of the school and lending the children shoes while their own were being mended. The boys did this work so well that they were

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

asked to mend shoes for people outside the school. For this work they received pay, which they needed in order to be able to remain in school, instead of leaving school in order to help support the family. Thus was born a cobbling shop. Then the principal realized that it would be unwise for some of the boys to take home the money they earned because it would be spent by unworthy parents in the saloon. She therefore started a savings bank to safeguard these earnings. Thus there originated two economic enterprises, a bank and a cobbling shop. On one of my visits I bought a pair of these little dilapidated shoes, for the sake of the parable they embodied. Their owner was a little girl. The health of this potential mother of future American citizens was in danger. Her education was interrupted; she was debarred from the school equipment, the expense of which went on whether she was present or absent. The principal attempted to meet these obvious human needs, and yet she was called before the school board and required to explain and defend her unusual audacity. But that is another story. The issue here raised is the extent to which a school can be used to meet economic needs, which involve the moral and spiritual welfare of the community.

These are three small illustrations of three big ideas. They typify the three most vital and

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

interesting of all questions, religion, politics, and economics. Using these words in their true and original meaning, they are the questions with which the community center proposes to deal. They are, of course, complex and difficult problems. But as soon as we look at our problems in terms of opportunity they cease to be problems, and become new and strangely fascinating enterprises. Over fifty per cent. of the girls and boys in America never finish the grammar grade of school. This condition is unwise, un-American, and involves waste and danger to the Republic. If a community center in a district like the one in Baltimore, where this condition is even worse, should adopt as its programme a consideration of this fact, it would be facing the obvious duty of adults organized on the basis of their responsibility for children, and yet they would at once be involved in these complex questions of economics. If they inquired into the causes which compelled children to drop out of school, it would lead them into the home and its condition; lead them into the factory to discover the amount of wage received; lead them into the saloon to discover what proportion of the wage was wasted there; lead them into the school to discover whether the studies were such as to hold the interest of children or to equip them for their work in life. If the adults should attempt to remove the causes they found to be

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

operating against the welfare of children, they would discover at once that it is not possible to purify the water in a well by painting the pump. They would need to go to the bottom of things and deal with economic conditions. The particular merit of the community center is that it is not a charity organization and is not content to paint the pump. So much of our social activity is spent in the unsatisfactory business of painting the pump, but the programme of the community center is fundamental democracy. The community center with an honest forum as its heart is the efficient instrument for effecting any needed social, political, or economic reform. For the key to such reform is education, as Lincoln clearly understood when he said: "With public sentiment nothing can fail, without it nothing can win. He who moulds public sentiment does a more important work than he who makes a law or issues a decree, for he makes these possible of enactment."

This, then, is a bird's-eye view of the nature and meaning of the community center movement. Speaking in agricultural terms, its aim may be said to be to make the schoolhouse the hub of the country-life wheel; in social terms, the community clubhouse; in educational terms, the people's university; in political terms, the community capitol; in economic terms, the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

coöperative exchange; in religious terms, the meeting-house for a society of friends. President Wilson spoke accurately and profoundly when he said of it, "What I see in this movement is the recovery of the constructive and creative genius of the American people." It is my purpose to write a book describing in detail a community center in operation.<sup>1</sup> My present aim is merely to assist others to discover the use of the schoolhouse as I have discovered it for myself. When I left my church, because it would not permit me either to preach the ideals of the Christian religion or to engage in community service to meet obvious human needs, I began a search for a better instrument through which I could render service to the cause of democracy. In my search for such an instrument, this is what I found — the schoolhouse used as a community center. It is the answer to my problem, the goal of my search which was begun twenty years ago, and from which Robert Browning switched me off, through the emphasis he placed on the value of work with individuals. I feel now that I have arrived. I have, therefore, gone from the church to the schoolhouse. I have left the church in order to enter the Christian ministry. I have ceased to

<sup>1</sup> Since this chapter was prepared, the author has written a little book called *A Community Center; What It Is and How to Organize It*. It is published by The Macmillan Company, New York.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

be a minister of a sectarian church and become a minister of education, which I regard as a step upward in the Kingdom of God. It is like a step up from aristocracy to democracy. The community center is the American church, the only national church which America has.

Ruskin says that great nations write their autobiographies in three languages, the book of their words, the book of their deeds, and the book of their art. Of these three, the only quite trustworthy one is the last. What men seek to embody in material form, what they invest large sums of money in, what they lovingly seek to beautify, is a sure index of the value they place upon it. The record of the value which America has begun to place on the discovery of the new use of the schoolhouse is to be clearly read in the handsome school buildings now being erected in large numbers from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The new discovery calls for a new type of architecture, a democratic type of building. It will be highly interesting to note the new type or types of buildings which America will produce as characteristic of her new ideals. When one visits one of these handsome new buildings with its beautiful auditorium and its pipe organ, one is at a loss to determine whether he is in a church or a school. Personally I think it is both. We have begun to feel the same love and reverence for these build-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ings which we once felt toward church buildings, because we have broadened the scope and deepened the content of the term "education" and subscribed under it much that was most worth while in the term "religion." The sure sign that we have discovered the religion of democracy is the obvious fact stated by Fletcher B. Dressler, when he says: "This is the age of schools and schoolhouses as characteristically as the later part of the Middle Ages was the period of churches and great church buildings. In each case the faith and fervor of the people can be read and fairly understood through a critical study of these objective results and the ideals for which they stand. It will not miss the mark very far to say that our ideals and feelings associated with the notion of popular education are becoming suffused with a glow and zeal heretofore only found associated directly or indirectly with religious faith and religious propaganda. And something of the same spirit that once wrought to build a tabernacle or a cathedral worthy of the dwelling place of the Most High, is seeking expression in furnishing to the youth of our land nobler temples in which their hearts, minds, and bodies may better adjust themselves to the demands of a practical civic brotherhood. Whoever, then, undertakes to build a schoolhouse to meet and foster these ideals ought to approach his task with holy

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

hands and a consciousness of the devotion which it is to typify."

If then the community center is a real church, do we need any other? The answer to this question is the subject of the next chapter.



## VIII

### A COMMUNITY CENTER AND A COMMUNITY CHURCH

*The Church is not to be identified with any ecclesiastical system that has as yet appeared; yet it reaches ever forward to embody itself in solid and structural forms. The Protestants are right, and the Catholics are also right; the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual kingdom, whose throne is in the private heart, and yet it can never rest until it has become a territorial institution, commanding the forum and the market-place with visible and unquestionable sway.*

CHARLES FERGUSON

## VIII

### A COMMUNITY CENTER AND A COMMUNITY CHURCH

AMERICA has no national church which she has yet discovered and recognized as such. Mr. Bryce, in his "American Commonwealth," dwells on the uniqueness and significance of this fact and has helped Americans to appreciate its meaning. But while America has no church which she recognizes as her national church, nevertheless she has one. It only remains to be discovered. And as it required a visitor from Europe to make us realize that a state church in America "glared by its absence," so it will require visitors from Europe to help us discover that, nevertheless, there does exist here a characteristic church of the American people, which has welded the nation together, which is its real bond of union, and which in its developed form will be recognized, not as the official, but the true, national church of America. The United States has no *established* church and under its Constitution never can have one, but it has a *national* church.

Among the Europeans who come to make our

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

country their home there are some who, when they have seen the community organized as a little democracy around the public school as its center and capitol, have written back to their friends in Europe that it embodied what they had dreamed America was like before they came here. To them it means applied democracy, America's ideals in operation. The time is near when it will be consciously recognized as a real church of the religion of democracy. This fact constitutes it our national church. Increasingly it will perform more of the functions now performed by the conventional churches, just as many of these functions have already been taken over by the state. The very excess of sectarianism is unconsciously furnishing its own cure. The community center will coördinate social activities now carried on with waste and extravagance. It is destined largely to replace the churches in the affection and loyalty of the people. In the community center, America will find herself, and through it she will apply the principles of her Declaration of Independence to a new "bill of particulars" and put them into effective operation.

It may no doubt be true that, by all the laws of logic and literary art, my story ought to have ended at the close of the previous chapter. Up to this point I have described my progress from the church to the schoolhouse and in the pre-

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

vious chapter I arrived at the goal. Why not end the story there? It is because my story is not written for the sake of logic and literary art, but for life's sake. Life does not move along the lines of logic. It is too complex. Society is not like a botanical garden where all the flowers are arranged in systematic and isolated rows, but like a forest where every kind of plant grows intermingled together.

Fairness to the complex character of our social institutions requires us to consider a further question. To indicate that it is a concrete question rather than a theory, I state it in the form of a letter recently received from a thoughtful student of community problems, who is puzzled by it. His letter is as follows:

Your book on the Community Center is immensely suggestive, and has proved of great value to many who are studying problems of community organization.

Your omission of any attempt to include the religious organization in the community set-up is one of the most noteworthy features of the book. This is the more noticeable in that the whole reveals a deep religious spirit and purpose. Your own religious sensibilities are manifestly very keen. To my mind the very fact that one of your temper must omit so important a discussion is a serious indictment of the sectarian order which we still allow to prevail in the religious field. An increasing number are interested in the organization of religion on the community basis. From your point of view, is there no hope of

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

realizing this? Numerous sectarian organizations are already seeking to camouflage their purpose and organization under claims of community standing, but none is willing to commit to the community the control of the institution.

Will the organization as you outline it be able permanently and in the largest efficiency to function without a definite recognition of religion? If it is maintained that the manifold service of the common good contemplated by the community organization, is religion, and that of the truest and sincerest type, what shall be said of the divided religious allegiance which the maintenance of the sectarian order in full flower involves?

I am seeking to give such question searching consideration, and am in touch with others who are doing the same. I should appreciate an opportunity to get and keep in touch with you as you think and work farther into this field of community organization. Long service under the sectarian system has fully convinced me that a new order is necessary, and the study of community organization makes me feel that the movement for the better community programme cannot omit religion and democratic control of its institutions.

The question raised in this letter is certain to become increasingly important in the near future. It is a serious present problem to many. It deserves an answer.

In previous chapters of this story I have attempted to show that a church dominated by dogma is hostile to intellectual liberty; a church dominated by money is hostile to social justice;

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

a church dominated by sectarianism is hostile to democracy; and that these are the three blights now spoiling the life of the churches and defeating their avowed purpose. These three moral defects constitute the reason why I could not remain with my church on honorable terms. The reason why I regard the community center as a better instrument to be used in behalf of the Kingdom of God is because it is free from these three blights which make the churches morally ineffective. The community center is free from the domination of dogma, money, and sectarianism. Such freedom constitutes it a fit instrument capable of being used in the service of the religion of democracy.

Moreover, it is the nearest approach to the Christian ideal of a church which has yet been made, because the public school is the only institution in America primarily devoted to the welfare of the child. Centuries ago a great statesman and philosopher said that the key to any right solution of our religious, political, and economic problems was to be found by setting "a child in the midst" of them. He regarded the child as the model citizen in the Kingdom of God, which was his term for democracy. The child is still the most respectable citizen we have. It is my settled conviction that Jesus was profoundly right in this position, which John Fiske has shown to be abundantly supported by the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

biological history of the race. The prolonged infancy of the human baby is the factor which developed motherhood and all our altruistic sentiments. And it will be by keeping the child in the midst of our thought, by giving the child the right of way in our economics, by making the child's welfare the formative principle in our social and civic activities, that we will usher in the Kingdom of God. If the world is to be saved at all, "it will be saved by the laughter of school children."

Now the distinctive and significant feature about the community center is that it is an assembly of adult citizens organized primarily on the basis of their responsibility for the child. Is not the community center, therefore, a church in the true sense of the term? And if so, do we need any other? To some it will no doubt be somewhat startling to hear the community center called a church. What we most need at this point is a little clear thinking. If one indulges in clear thinking, I feel sure it can lead him to only one answer. He will see that the community center is not only a real church, but is the kind of church which Jesus would most heartily approve. Sectarian churches have no monopoly on the Kingdom of God and are not identical with it. Indeed, it is not only historically false, but also morally hurtful to identify the church with any form of ecclesiastical institution.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

The first fact to be kept in the foreground is that Jesus founded no church at all in the accepted sense of that term. At least no evidence to this effect has yet been discovered, and much evidence exists to show that He did not. In the four biographies of Jesus in the New Testament, the word "church" occurs only twice, and one of these references is an incidental reference, while the phrase "the Kingdom of God," or its equivalent, occurs one hundred and seven times. This may serve as a fairly accurate indication of the relative value which Jesus attached to the two ideas. In the church He appeared to be little interested, but in the Kingdom of God He was supremely interested. It was the object not only of his major loyalty, but his sole loyalty, and in its behalf He died a martyr.

Not only so, but in the memorabilia of Jesus, the chief place which the church of his day occupies is as the object of his attack. It was the church which secured his judicial murder. Jesus, therefore, did not work for the church of his day, but against it. What He did work for was the Kingdom of God, the rule of spiritual and democratic principles in human society. He believed that the worth of any institution is to be tested by its value to the Kingdom of God. He would use any agency which had such value. Therefore, He tried to persuade the church to become such an agency. When it indignantly re-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

jected his advice and expelled him with violence, He did his work out of doors with the people and set in operation principles which created a new and better type of church. It is quite possible to conceive it to be the duty of a Christian to follow the example of Jesus. It is a dangerous thing to do, but it may be the right thing to do.

The experience of Jesus with the church of his day suggests an obvious conclusion, and this is the second fact to be kept in the foreground of our thought, namely, that the church is strictly a human invention and has all the defects of any other human product; that it is a mere tool to be used, a means to an end, not an end in itself; that there is a constant necessity to mend it; that it is to be mended or replaced or dispensed with altogether if the interests of democracy require it; that there is nothing sacred about the stone and sand in a church building, but something very sacred indeed about a man or woman or child. What Jesus did was to organize little groups or societies or assemblies of men and women, which were neither ethnic nor military, which transcended all national, racial, and creedal boundaries, societies of men and women devoted to his ideal of democracy. His own little society numbered twelve. George Matheson called it "the league of pity." Wherever, therefore, there exists a similar society of men and women devoted to the same ideals, whether they

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

meet in a schoolhouse, in the caves of the earth, or out in the open fields, it is just as truly a church, according to the standard of Jesus, as any ecclesiastical establishment, and in point of fact it may be and often is, more so. "There is a true church," said Ruskin, "wherever one hand meets another helpfully."

According to the standard of Jesus, then, the community center is a real church. Do we need any other? Certainly not, provided it can perform all the service that such an institution ought to render. Can the community center perform this complete service for human life? I assume that we agree that religion is a universal necessity, and this is the third fact to be kept clearly in the foreground. So long as there is a star in the sky and love in the heart, and so long as life is full of absurdities and injustices, so long will religion be indispensable, by whatever name we may call it. I realize that the term "religion" has been so degraded that its meaning is obscured. What I mean is that, in view of the immature stage of human development, and in view of the cruelty and loneliness of life, it is necessary for man to seek comfort and inspiration in an ideal world, which contains the elements of beauty, justice, and rationality. I have in mind the same thing which led Professor Valdemar Bennike to say, in an address on the Danish Folk High School, that "the main ob-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ject of this school is not to impart to our students a mass of useful information — that is only a secondary aim. The principal aim is to impart to them a spiritual view of life, so that they may see there is some *sense in their existence.*" "Religion," says Ira W. Howerth, "is the effective desire to be in right relation to the power manifesting itself in the universe." Considered, then, in its essential nature, religion performs for man the same service which music does and both grow out of the same need.<sup>1</sup> Regarded not as a dogma or a ritual, but as an *attitude to life*, there is no man without a religion. At least I have never met such a man, and it is my belief that no such man anywhere exists.

If, then, we are agreed that this universal need of man must be met, our question is whether it can be sufficiently satisfied through the community center, and whether any other kind of church is necessary. It is obvious that the community center will perform for adults very many functions which a church is designed to perform, just as the public school is now performing them for children. It is teaching moral and religious ideals indirectly through all its studies and activities, through the personal influence of its teachers and through the social life of the school.

<sup>1</sup> In my little book, *The Legend of the Christmas Rose*, I endeavored to show the nature and universality of this need, by explaining why music is the characteristic art of both Christianity and Pessimism.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

I believe the position which George Herbert Palmer maintains in his monograph, "Ethical and Moral Instruction in Schools," is correct, that the indirect method is the wise method. For character is a by-product of service and cannot be sought directly with much success. Religion makes friends, but does not take pupils. It spreads by contagion. The Chinese word is the same for religion and education. It is made up of two root words meaning literature and piety. Their word "piety" means something totally different from our word. It refers to ideals of human relationship in social and civic life: that is, they regard both religion and education as consisting of spiritual ideals, acquired through human association. Both of these functions are now performed by the public school, one by its associational life, the other through its teaching of history and literature. For if the school treats history and literature as culture, and not merely to present facts or to illustrate the rules of grammar, it cannot avoid teaching moral and religious ideals.

In like manner the community center will perform the same two services for the religious life of adults. In its forum it is not possible to discuss economic and political questions in any adequate fashion without treating religious ideals, for these questions are all moral questions at bottom. And in the community activities it

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

necessarily promotes the highest religious spirit. For a man's religious life goes no higher up on the perpendicular — that is, toward God — than it goes out on the horizontal — that is, toward one's fellow men. It was irresistible logic which led the disciple John to ask, 'If you cannot love your fellow men, whom you have seen, how can you love God, whom you have not seen?' The answer to the question is so obvious that it does not need to be stated.

If, then, the community center is a real church, performing many of the functions which the church once performed and is in a position to perform them more effectively, our question is, Do we still need a private community church to supplement the work of the public community center church? I think we do. I am aware of the fact that a large and increasing number of thoughtful men and women of the highest character do not think so, but regard the community center as an all-sufficient church. I agree with this position to the extent that I believe the time is coming when the community center will be the only church needed anywhere, and even now I give to it the chief place in my affections. But nevertheless, I believe that for the present a private or volunteer church is needed to do what the community center is not yet able to do. My reason for so thinking is that the community center is a geographical institu-

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

tion. It belongs to all the people of its district. This constitutes its great strength, but it has the weakness of its strength. Its liberty is limited; that is, the nature and number of its activities are determined by the lowest common denominator, in case the district contains many who are unprogressive and unenlightened. Only those enterprises can be undertaken which are agreed upon by the majority. It is our high task and opportunity to raise this low common denominator through education. But it is not high enough now to permit those things to be done which most need to be done. Hence the need of a private church, which, because it is a volunteer organization, is free to do them. Moreover, such a volunteer institution is our best agency for educating public opinion to undertake community activities. New enterprises usually need to be initiated, and during their pioneer period to be supported by private groups, if they are to make any headway at all.

While I believe that the community center is destined to perform all the functions of a true church, it cannot do so now, because the lowest common denominator, on the basis of which all public organizations must conduct their activities, will not permit it. Therefore, I believe that some form of volunteer community church is a present practical necessity. Another fundamental reason for this position is that for

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

the practice of democracy it is not sufficient to have truth stated in intellectual terms alone: it must be stated also in terms of emotion. For the conduct of men is determined more by sentiment than by any intellectual consideration. A man thinks mostly with his heart. I do not mean to suggest that the schools exclude the element of emotion in their teaching. They cannot if they would. As a matter of fact, educators are more and more stressing the function of motive in education. They are coming to believe, with Lyman Abbott, that "the object of education is not to pour a certain amount of learning into an empty mind, but to develop a certain amount of muscle in an undeveloped mind. Power, not knowledge, is the end of education." Knowledge, to become power, must be felt knowledge; it must be charged with emotion. Ray Stannard Baker says, "The one essential purpose of education is to get an individual going from within so that he will run himself." A man runs himself aright only when his interior purpose or motive or emotion, which controls conduct, is rectified and in operation. But when we deal with the ideals of the heart we are dealing with religion. And while the schools have begun to appreciate this fact in theory, they have not yet given it the central place in practice which it deserves. Until it is given such a central position in the school and in the community center,

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

a volunteer church will be needed to do what the community center is not yet prepared to do.

One concrete illustration will make my meaning clear and pointed: neither the school for children nor the community center for adults is as yet in a position to teach the Bible. I agree with Professor Huxley in thinking that the Bible is an indispensable aid in the process of cultivating the religious feeling as a guide to conduct. In his essay entitled "The School Board," he says:

My belief is that no human being, and no society composed of human beings, ever did, or ever will, come to much unless their conduct is governed and guided by the love of some ethical ideals. . . . I have always been strongly in favor of secular education in the sense of education without theology; but I must confess I have been no less seriously perplexed to know by what practical measures the religious feeling, which is the essential basis of conduct, was to be kept up in the present utterly chaotic state of opinion on these matters, without the use of the Bible. . . . For three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; it has become the national epic of Britain; it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form; and, finally, it forbids the veriest hind, who never left his village, to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much human-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ized and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work?

The quaint law passed November 11, 1647, by the General Court of the Massachusetts Plantation, and the first one to be met with in American history, expressly states that the chief object in founding the free public school was to give the citizens a knowledge of the Bible. To-day for the most part it is illegal to teach the Bible in the public schools. This striking change of attitude is highly significant. The sufficient reason for it is sectarianism. The law passed by the Illinois Legislature, to exclude the Bible from the public schools, was sustained by the supreme court of the state, on the ground that the Bible is a sectarian book. The supreme court of Wisconsin has shut it out of the schools of that state on the same ground. These judges are no doubt learned and well-meaning men, but they ought to have known that the Bible is in no sense a sectarian book. As President Bascom says: "The Bible is related to sectarian teaching as water to all other fluids. It is the basis of all, but has the specific qualities of none." It was not only written before any sectarian churches

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

existed, but it is a body of "eternal literature"; it contains spiritual and political ideals, universally valid. The sects have done the book a serious injury. They have misrepresented it. They have prevented it from becoming either accurately or widely known. Sectarianism has injured the Bible to such an extent that both its admirers and critics unite to oppose its introduction as a text-book in the public school.

The widespread ignorance of this book is a serious national loss. The study of it ought to be in the curriculum of every school, because what knowledge of it our girls and boys receive, they get from the home and the sectarian Sunday-school, both of which are performing their task very poorly indeed. Moreover, to divorce a study of the Bible from the study of science, history, and literature, leads a boy to identify the highest ideals of life with Sunday, churches, and Sunday-schools. It gives him a false and departmental idea of religion and a false and secular conception of the state. This is one of the chief dangers in a democracy, as I hope to show in the next chapter. The point I am here making is that a system of popular education ought to include instruction in spiritual and political ideals such as the Bible contains. Our girls and boys "are permitted to know Homer, but not Job; the Institutes of Justinian, but not the Ten Commandments; the Jupiter of the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

Romans, but not the Jehovah of the Hebrews.” We think it important for them to know about the Athenian Republic, but it is just as interesting and far more important for American girls and boys to know about the Hebrew Republic. The American people have banished sectarian theology from the schools, which is wise, but in doing so they have banished the unsectarian Bible, which is unwise. It is like burning up the ship to get rid of the cockroaches. It is like throwing out the baby with the bath. Two recent experiments have been initiated in North Dakota and in Colorado to cure this defect and make a connection between a study of the Bible and the public schools. It is a hopeful sign of the beginning of a saner public policy, but it is only a slight beginning. When we have sloughed off our sectarian prejudices and provincialism, we shall discover the Bible and recognize it as the nation’s best guide-book. It is not only history and literature of a high order, but the most vital and challenging statement of democracy to be found anywhere. As the Bible is excluded for the present from the public school, so it must be excluded from the community center.

I dwell on this illustration not only to make clear my conviction that a community center ought, and I believe some day will, perform for human life all the services which a true church ought to perform, but also to make clear my

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

conviction that, until such a day arrives, a private church of some sort is needed to do what a community center cannot now do. What kind of a church ought this to be? If a sectarian church is controlled by unprogressive and unenlightened people, it has, as Professor Carver says, all the disadvantages of a community center and none of its advantages. It is therefore of little use. It is obvious that a church which is either able or willing to perform only those functions unperformed by a community center must be a community-minded church such as was described in a previous chapter. It will waste none of its strength in sectarian rivalry. It will regard itself as an ally, not a rival of the community center. Its relation to it will be in no sense official, but it will be vital. Its definite policy will be to undertake no activity which can be better conducted by the community center, and to hand over to the community center any activity already inaugurated when the general welfare requires it. It will give the community center first place and itself second place.

It needs to be kept clearly in mind, that it is not a theory but a condition we are here discussing. The stimulating fact is that the thing has begun to happen. Here is a concrete challenge presented to me in the course of my work for the Government by a community in Tennessee. I could parallel it by a large number of similar

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

experiences in all parts of the country. This community is in the open country. In it there is a fine consolidated school with a principal and eleven teachers. The principal is a woman, who is a social engineer as well as a teacher. She is conducting very successfully several community enterprises for the adult citizens, social, educational, and economic. The most serious and complex difficulty in her work, she told me, is due to two churches, which belong to two branches of the same sect. They are constantly competing and quarreling. Frequently some of her community enterprises had been brought to the verge of wreck by these disputes and jealousies. At this point of her story I exclaimed, "Blessed are the good with whom it is pleasant to live!"

Now, she said, what am I to do with these churches? They are constantly hurting my work and disintegrating the community spirit. We have ready our plans for erecting an additional building on the school grounds, costing \$25,000, and containing an auditorium and other facilities for community activities. I have delayed this enterprise for several months to see what the churches were going to do and to give them a chance to mend their ways. I feel that we ought not to wait longer. What do you advise us to do? I wonder what my readers think would be the best course for her to pursue.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

After making the essential facts of the situation stand out clearly by careful questioning, I answered that there are several possible things that a person in your position might do. I will state them in the ascending order of their value to the community's welfare.

1. Do nothing and let the churches keep on contending with each other, in which case the community's experiment in democracy and its spiritual life will suffer damage.

2. Try to unite the two churches formally, in which case you would probably have a debate on your hands for the next ten years, and in the end still have a sectarian church, even if your attempt succeeded.

3. Start an independent community church to be an ally and not a rival of the community center and meet those needs which the community center may not now be able to meet.

4. Build your new school auditorium, organize a community church, and let it use your auditorium, in which case you would violate the constitution of the United States and the American tradition of separation of church and State, which is not infrequently done.

5. Build your new building, and conduct an open forum on Sunday, at which you will have good music and addresses on all kinds of subjects including morals and religion, in

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

which case you will meet the moral and religious needs of the people along with other needs, show the churches a more excellent way, and cause them to die a slow and painless death, replacing them with a new and better type of institution.

In the presence of a complex situation it is solid comfort to discover a formative principle, which will cut a clear path through the confusing details. Your guiding principle is this;—while in America there can be no official connection between the State and church, there ought to be a vital connection between the State and religion. Your community center activities are in fact religious in their nature, and will be more effectively conducted by a conscious recognition of this fact. This principle clearly indicates that the fifth on the list of the five possible courses is the best. I trust your community has the courage to undertake this pioneer piece of work. But whether you take the fifth or third course depends on the present state of development among your people. If they are equal to it, I think you ought to take the fifth course. If they are not yet educated up to it, then take the third course as a stepping-stone toward the goal. Your duty to your country, I believe, limits you either to the fifth or the third of these courses. The law of accommodation to the people's present capacity will determine your

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

choice between them. It may be that more communities than I realize are ready to take the fifth course, but my present feeling is that the large majority of them are not prepared to go beyond the third. You ought to be ahead of your community, but not so far ahead as to prevent its growth. If the lead of a pencil will not stand long shoulders, it is wiser to sharpen it with short shoulders than to make it useless.

Is it, then, the destiny of a private church to decrease as the community center increases? Precisely so. It is not only its manifest destiny, but its rare opportunity. In a group of Chinese students at Columbia University to whom I was giving a course of lectures, there was a young woman, who took the highest academic honors ever given to a Chinese woman, and who is now at the head of an important educational institution in China. At the close of one of the lectures she asked whether I thought any church at all was needed. She perhaps had been reading Professor Royce. I frankly admitted that, if we regarded things as they ought to be, not as they are, we should need no church. That is the ideal condition, and what a relief it would be, to be sure! It is also the Christian position. Jesus founded no church, and his disciple John, who in Revelation gives a picture of the new Jerusalem,— that is, the ideal society,— states that

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

one of the chief characteristics of it is that there shall be no church in it. He says: "I saw no sanctuary in the city, for the Lord God, the Ruler of all, is its sanctuary. The glory of God has shone upon it. The nations will live their lives by its light."

The Christian ideal of the church is that its function is to make itself useless as speedily as possible; that is, when its aims are realized it ceases to be needed, its use decreases in proportion as society itself becomes Christianized. Until such time comes, we shall need some kind of organization whose aim it is to foster Christian ideals, to write them into law, and with them construct a new social order. In view of the Christian conception of a church's function, is it not reasonable to expect that it ought unselfishly to become an ally and servant of the community center, through which the whole of society can be served and integrated? If a private church should thus serve a community center, then the triumph of the community center can be regarded as its own triumph. The Christian spirit, that should guide it, finds fitting expression in Whittier's poem, "My Triumph":

"Let the thick curtain fall;  
I better know than all  
How little I have gained,  
How vast the unattained.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

“Others shall sing the song,  
Others shall right the wrong,—  
Finish what I begin,  
And all I fail of win.

“What matter, I or they?  
Mine or another’s day,  
So the right word be said  
And life the sweeter made?

“Ring, bells in unreared steeples,  
The joy of unborn peoples!  
Sound, trumpets far off blown,  
Your triumph is my own!”

Its golden age lies before any private church which is clear-sighted enough to accept the Christian view of its functions, to perceive the signs of the times, and to serve the cause of the Kingdom of God rather than itself. The time was when the church was a real community center. The mediæval church was a great social and political organization. Its cathedrals were not merely places of worship: they were the inns, the hospitals, the banks of the times; they were public schools, guild-halls, and court-houses; they were the centers of industry and art. It is obvious that it is impossible for the churches of to-day, because of their wasteful divisions and sectarian rivalries, to perform the functions of a true Christian church, and that this function can be performed only by the community center. The free public school is the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

democratic cathedral of the religion of democracy. The sectarian church can oppose the community center for doing what the church once did, only for the same reason that they are opposed, as Rauschenbusch says, "by amusement caterers, who want people to come to them and spend money; by the old-line politicians, who shiver when the people begin to think for themselves on political questions; and by some priests of the Roman Catholic Church, who set their church above all public interests and hope to quarantine their people against the public school and the common spirit of the nation." The reason for the opposition is vested interest. If any sectarian church displays such a dog-in-the-manger spirit, it will discover its opposition to be a boomerang. It can save its life only by becoming an ally of the community center. It is futile to fight against God and the people.

Steadily during a long period certain vital activities like education, the care of the sick, and municipal government, once conducted by the church, have one by one been taken over from the church and become community functions. To transfer additional functions from the church to the public school is just another similar step in the evolution of the progress of the Kingdom of God. If the churches were really interested in the Kingdom of God rather than in their own corporate welfare, they would rejoice in this

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

process, not only because these activities will be more economically administered, but because of the spiritual good that will result from the removal of the divisions, which needlessly separate men.

It is true that through the loss of these practical activities, the church has become more and more like a disembodied spirit and her ministers feel a keen sense of unreality in their work. She is now wistfully looking for points of contact with the practical concerns of human life. The community center furnishes her just such a point of contact as she needs. It sets before her an open door of opportunity which no man can shut. If the church would cease to substitute herself for the Kingdom of God, would recognize the hand of God in human history, would put the Kingdom of God first and herself second, would take on herself the form of a servant, would make a connection not between herself as an ecclesiastical institution and the community center, but between her members as individuals and the community center, she would begin her golden age. She would hasten the triumph of democracy, and save herself as a by-product of the process. Her own past experience ought to teach her the wisdom of such a policy. "Her history," says Rauschenbusch, "is the story of how she fell by rising and rose by falling. No one who loves

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

her can serve her better than by bringing home to her that by seeking her life she loses it, and that when she loses her life to serve the Kingdom of God, she will gain it."

The community center is the development of the public school into a people's university. The church was the mother of popular education. We owe a real debt to Martin Luther for his service in its behalf, and for his insistence that the church should have no control whatever over popular education. The church was the mother of the free public school in America. The minister and school-teacher were both employed by the same town meeting in the Massachusetts Plantation, where the citizens and the members of the church were one and the same group of people. Since, therefore, the church is the mother and creator of the free public school, shall the mother disown her daughter, when the daughter grows big and becomes a people's university? Or shall the church, like a true mother, very gladly spend and be spent herself, that her daughter may have a more abundant life?

The attitude of the church to the community center may or may not be paralleled by the attitude of the Hebrew nation to a similar movement which Jesus inaugurated. In that case the Hebrew church proved to be what George Matheson calls "a blind lamplighter."

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

Very beautifully he describes the sad and puzzling tragedy:

The nation has rejected the fulfillment of her own dream. She has given a king to the world, and she has refused to crown him. I have read in one of George Macdonald's novels of a born-blind lamp-lighter. He illuminated the city at night; but he had no sense of what he was doing. So has it been with this land. She has presented the portrait to the gallery; she has heard the plaudits of the spectators: and she has refused to join in them. In all history there is nothing so unique. It is the enemies of this land that have crowned her world-king; it is the Gentiles that have come to His light. The lamp-lighter has been blind to the beauty of that throne which she has illuminated. Palestine has lit up the scene; she has listened to the crowd shouting their applause; and she has wondered why. She has been like a deaf-mute in a concert room. She has struck by accident the notes of a harp, and by accident they have burst into music. The audience has cheered the performance to the echo; but the performer knows not her triumph.

Whether or not the church of to-day will repeat this tragic blunder remains to be seen. The fact that she has already repeated it so frequently in the past gives one little hope that she will do otherwise now. All the national churches of Europe have opposed the progress of democracy. The Protestant state churches of Germany have for years insisted on loyalty to the monarchy as an essential part of the Chris-

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

tian life and are the enemies of both political and social democracy. The Church of England is Tory in its sympathies and influence. "Nothing in the history of the nineteenth century," says Rauschenbusch, "is more thrilling than the passionate longing of Italian patriots for the freedom and unity of Italy. Yet the ancient church of Italy, whose secular dominion had been the chief obstacle to Italian unity, not only resisted the final achievement of that desire, but forty years later still stood aside while Italy was celebrating the jubilee of its union."

The churches in the United States have had a more unfettered life and freer chance to serve the Kingdom of God than the churches of any other country, and would do so now if they had not substituted the tyranny of money for other ancient forms of tyranny. It is true that the churches in America show some uneasiness over their present conditions. A woman once exclaimed to Mark Twain, "How God must love you!" After she had left, he turned to his secretary with the remark, "She has not heard of our strained relations." The fact that the churches are dimly conscious that their relations to God are somewhat strained is ground for a little hope, but not much. Their attitude to the community center movement is a simple and searching test of their wisdom. I have no desire to

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

prejudge what they will do, but I have very little hope that they will seize their golden opportunity to save their life by losing it in devotion to a cause outside themselves. The controlling motive of the churches is selfishness and sectarian rivalry; they are in bondage to vested interests; they have sold their souls for money. I fear that "Ephraim is joined to his idols" and that we had better "let him alone." It is a disturbing but significant fact that when Lincoln was leading the cause for freedom, in his first campaign for the presidency, twenty out of twenty-three ministers in his town were against him. "These men well know," he said, "that I am for freedom, and yet with this book" — indicating the New Testament — "in their hands, in the light of which human bondage cannot live a moment, they are going to vote against me. I do not understand it at all."

There are periods in history when the welfare of the Kingdom of God makes it the clear duty of a progressive and enlightened Christian man to treat the church as Jesus treated the church of his day. How is that? He will withdraw from all active interest in it, just as Jesus did. He will make known the moral reasons for his act, just as Jesus did. He will make a constructive effort to replace it with something better, just as Jesus did. The first of these steps has already been taken in our day by large numbers of people.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

The second step has been taken as yet only by a few. The third step will be taken as soon as we discover that the community center is the real church for which our quest has been made. Whether a man believes that a sectarian church is worth preserving, or whether he believes, as I do, that it ought to be transformed into a community church, the best way to accomplish either result is to withdraw from it and to work for the community center. For the chief reason why the inadequacy of sectarian churches has become apparent is because the community at large has become seriously Christian in its ideals and aspirations. If, then, we desire to elevate the moral ideals of the church up to the level of the moral standards of the community, our best method, at once considerate and effective, is not to attach the church directly, but to set a standard, to which they must either conform or die. The community center furnishes such a standard. The pride of men prevents them from making a point-blank acknowledgment of their previous errors. The method here suggested is the application of pressure through the law of necessity, only the law is applied indirectly rather than directly. Not that I would hesitate in the least to apply it directly, but it is less efficient in securing the result. The subjunctive mode method rather than the indicative mode method is both kinder and more effective. Dr.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

Joseph H. Odell had this method in mind when he said: "I believe that if the denominations did not freely subsidize men, there would be a clerical famine twenty years from now. And furthermore, I believe that would be one of the very best things which could possibly happen to the Christian church in America, because it would compel us to close several thousand starving churches in small towns and bring about union as a matter of necessity." This is the operation of natural law, and it is now operating to produce such a famine in spite of the artificial attempt to stop it through subsidizing. It is wiser to let it operate, for nothing is so convincing as a fact.

The best service, then, we can render a sectarian church is to forsake it and go to the community center; for only he can reform a defective thing, who can replace it with something better. I did not realize it at the beginning, but I have now come to see that my own action in going from the church to the schoolhouse is typical of a wide and I believe a growing movement of to-day. It is typical of a large number of ministers, whose awakened conscience is compelling them to leave the ministry of sectarian churches, and is preventing a still larger number of young men from entering it. To such men this reluctant conclusion is a real and sometimes a tragic sorrow. For the reason why they have

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

reached this decision is not because they lack the heroic and unselfish desire to render public service, but precisely the opposite reason. The best young men are refusing to enter the service of sectarian churches, not because their sense of chivalry is low, but because it is high. What is the way out for those men who cannot enter or remain in the church, but who still desire to be Christian ministers? The message of hope which I particularly desire to bring to such men is that my own experience is typical not only of their problem, but typical also of its solution.

The community center is their door of opportunity. Through it they can continue to be Christian ministers. True, they cease to be ministers of an ecclesiastical institution, but they become ministers of education. If we broaden the scope and deepen the content of the term "education," as the community center does, then they will be Christian ministers in a truer sense than ever before. Their ministry will be like that of Jesus. The favorite name applied to him by his contemporaries was "Teacher." He was a real community center worker. There is no evidence that He made any effort to become the successor of the High Priest Caiaphas. The mere suggestion of seeing him occupy such a position seems to us not only a bit of humor, but also a dishonor to his memory. If we take

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

as our standard the spirit and method of Jesus, a minister to-day ought to go from the church to the schoolhouse and regard it as the best instrument for his ministry.

It is a highly significant fact that the majority of the leaders in the notable reform movements of North Dakota carried on by the "Non-Partisan League" are ministers who left the church because it was a hopelessly inefficient instrument of the Kingdom of God. The training which ministers receive, defective as it is, still seems to be best fitted to prepare men for community service. Theological seminaries like Union of New York and those at Harvard, Yale, and the University of Chicago are non-sectarian in fact and in spirit. Yet they send their graduates into sectarian churches. To send modern-minded young men, who think in community terms, into sectarian churches that do not want them, is a waste of good material, and it insures trouble both for the churches and for the men. The Presbyterian denomination has been fighting Union Seminary for a generation. The agreement of armed neutrality, made in 1916 between them, was a humorous, dishonest, and cowardly compromise. Such a peace-at-any-price policy arrives nowhere and insures nothing except damage to the moral integrity of both parties to the pact. If these seminaries would honestly recognize the facts as they are, they would cease to

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

pretend to be what they are not. If they had the statesmanship to see the hand of God in history, they would openly begin to train their men, without apologies and with new enthusiasm, for service in community churches and community centers. They would also carry on a definite campaign to organize these two institutions in order to meet the needs of our day and to prepare a type of institution which fitted the type of men they are already graduating. I expect to see the day when they will adopt such a policy because they will be compelled to do so if they hope to secure young men to teach.

One denomination has undertaken a propaganda among high-school boys to secure candidates for the thinning lines of its ministry. This is effort spent on the wrong and the dwindling end of the problem. Every profession, if it is to maintain itself, ought to have more candidates than it can accept, so that it could make a selection of the best material and thus maintain a high standard. It ought to be obvious that the only lure to secure such a condition is to make the office worthy of the respect of young men. There will be no lack of volunteers for community centers and community churches when such institutions are organized. Furnish the right kind of work and the right kind of young men will be ready to undertake it. One hopeful step in this direction is the fact that

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

Yale has abandoned the term, "the theological seminary," and substituted for it the term, "a school of religion." The next logical step is to call the graduate from "a school of religion," by the title, "a minister of *education*." And the logical place for a minister of education is in the public school community center.

The director of community center activities is called "the community secretary," the "keeper of secrets." It lays no claim to moral superiority and puts no barrier between him and his fellow men. It aims to embody the new democratic standard of greatness which Jesus dramatically illustrated on a certain memorable occasion, and explained it by saying: 'The kings of the Gentiles are their masters and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. With you it is not so; but let the greatest among you be as the younger, and the leader be like him who serves.' The office of community secretary is a new profession, but it is destined to become one of the most useful and honored positions in America. As a public official a community secretary could not be a pastor of a community church, but while occupying such a position he could, in his capacity as private citizen, help to organize a community church to do what the community center cannot yet do, and to be its ally. The office of community secretary is the logical agency through which the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

greatest service can be rendered to the cause of fundamental democracy, which is the cause of the Christian religion.

The reason why the best way to serve the churches is to serve the community center is the well-established fact that conventionalized institutions are never reformed from the inside. Political parties are not reformed by politicians, nor churches by ministers, nor courts of law by lawyers, nor agriculture by farmers. They are reformed by pressure applied from the outside. Of all institutions the church is the most conservative. The fact that the Russian church and the Roman church each perform their ritual in a language that was living when each church was young, but which has now been unintelligible to the people for many centuries, indicates its inability to adapt itself to changing needs. It is endowed with a special capacity to resist the introduction of new ideas. A typical illustration of its resistance to new ideas is narrated by Thomas E. Watson, in his "History of France," an incident which gave Robespierre his start in life:

Franklin's lightning-rod had been adopted by a rich landowner in the neighbourhood of Arras, and the good folks who see wickedness in all new things raised a clamor against these rods. "What! Shouldn't God have the right to strike a house with lightning, if he pleased?" Such was the wail of the orthodox. Priests clamored, the people clamored; and the

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

municipal authority actually ordered Vissery, the landowner, to pull down the rods. The municipality was of the opinion that there was impiety in the erection of conductors whose avowed purpose was to make God's lightnings miss a house which they otherwise would have hit. Vissery, strange to say, was not cowed by this outcry. He employed Robespierre to defend him in his right to use the rods, and won his case. Even in France, human reason was beginning to rebel against the absurdities of orthodoxy.

I do not urge a man to go from the church to the schoolhouse because he would find the school much more hospitable to new ideas than the church. It suffers from the disease of professionalism just as the church does, though not to the same extent. Colonel Parker, writing on the progress of the nineteenth century, speaks from first-hand knowledge when he says:

One thing is worth mentioning, that every progressive step in education has been taken in the teeth of the so-called "leading educators." When a new idea appeared, the "rabbis" hurled at it all their logic, of which the effect might have been annihilating, had not the new idea been stronger than their logic. In 1879 a leading educator of the United States warned the teachers of Massachusetts, in their state convention, to use "nature study very sparingly." It was impossible for them at that time to use the subject more "sparingly" than they were using it; indeed, there was hardly a bit of it in New England. The kindergarten had its battles and its victories. Manual training was born in a perfect

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

cyclone of illogical and violent attacks. Never to be forgotten is the National Superintendents' meeting at Washington, to which the best educational talent in the country had been summoned to stamp out the new "fad," manual training. The order has been something like this: first, zealous and unremitting attacks; secondly, a little thought, which admitted manual training into the high schools; then some more thoughtsome demonstrations of the benefit of manual training — and it crept slowly down into the grammar, and even into the primary school, where it is most needed. It is well to preserve this bit of history, for it is now difficult to find in America any educator who is not an earnest advocate of manual training, or perchance, the originator of the "fad." Child study has come in to reinforce the pedagogy of manual training.

It is impossible to tell how all these wonderful changes have come about — not, surely, through one man or one group of men. Like all progress, the movement ahead in education has been a zigzag. It is curious to note that suggestions of reform came generally from intelligent laymen who saw clearly the defects in the existing state of things. As the problem of self-government grew, it was felt that the schools did not keep pace with it. The needs of the masses brought the question of common education close to the hearts of thoughtful patriots.

The hopeful and humorous item in Colonel Parker's indictment of the schools is that the enemies of new ideas become so convinced of their mistake that they desire to pose as the originators of them. But the really significant item

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

in his indictment lies in the fact that reforms usually come from the masses of the people. It is just as wholesome for an institution as for an individual to take a frequent bath in the common people. Neither the church nor school is friendly to new ideas, but the community center will furnish the balance wheel for both institutions.

While the community center is at once both a church and a school, it is a new type. It is organized, not on the basis of any creed, either theological or scholastic, or of any personal taste or self-interest, but on the basis of our common responsibility. This means a new and fundamental structure. It is not directed by professionals, either clerical or scholastic, but by the people themselves. It is a parliamentary organization. The characteristic features which will safeguard it against the blight of professionalism are these: it is wedded to patriotism; it is committed to open discussion; it is an assembly of citizen-friends. But the pole-star of its life is the fact that it is organized on the basis of our common responsibility. It is this fact which creates its spirit, controls its purpose, and coördinates its activity, and the greatest of these is its spirit.

The community center, whose aim is to secure organized coöperation, proceeds on the assumption that there can be no coöperation

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

without the *spirit* of coöperation. For coöperation is first of all a state of mind. Therefore, it takes the word "sympathy," which is the master-word of the Four Gospels, and puts into it the rich content it has in these documents. Such a content is suggested by John Dewey when he said: "The chief constituent of social efficiency is intelligent sympathy or good will. For sympathy as a desirable quality is something more than mere feeling. It is cultivated imagination for whatever men have in common and a rebellion at whatever unnecessarily divides them." The spirit of the community center is clearly indicated in a profound statement, which might appropriately be taken for its motto, made by a negro bishop of Kansas when he asked and answered the question: "When is a man lost? A man is never lost when he does n't know where he is, because he always knows where he is, wherever he is. A man is lost when he does n't know where the other folks are."

The chief work of the community secretary and the spirit which inspires all his activities are accurately described in one of David Grayson's "Adventures in Friendship." When David Grayson sat at dinner with a factory owner, Mr. Vedder, and was helping him to settle a strike then in operation, Mr. Vedder asked him what kind of social philosopher he called himself.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

“‘I do not call myself by any name,’ said Grayson, ‘but if I chose a name, do you know the name I would like to have applied to me?’ ‘I cannot imagine,’ was the answer. ‘Well, I would like to be called “an introducer.”’ “My friend, Mr. Blacksmith, let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Plutocrat. I could almost swear that you are brothers, so near alike you are. You will find each other wonderfully interesting, once you get over the awkwardness of the introduction.”’ ‘It is a good name,’ said Mr. Vedder, laughing. ‘It’s a wonderful name,’ said Grayson, ‘and it’s about the biggest and finest work in the world — to know human beings just as they are and to make them acquainted with one another just as they are. Why, it’s the foundation of all the democracy there is or ever will be. Sometimes I think that friendliness is the only achievement of life worth while, and unfriendliness the only tragedy.”’ The community center is a factory for the manufacture of friendship, and the chief business of a community secretary is to be “an introducer.”

This, then, is the nature and meaning of the community center and the need in American life which it is designed to meet. When a man discovers the true function which the free public school is designed to perform in the unification and development of community life; when he discovers that it is the appropriate place for the

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

untrammeled exercise of the sacred duty of manhood suffrage in a republic; when he discovers that it furnishes the ideal platform for a community forum, where citizens may go to school to one another and freely discuss all social and economic questions in order to fit themselves for the responsibilities of citizenship; when he discovers that the school is the logical social center for all enterprises which concern the common welfare, promoting organized coöperation and preventing needless waste of time and money through burdensome overhead community charges and through duplication of social activities — when he discovers these things, he has made a profound discovery of incalculable value to American ideals and to human welfare. He has discovered not only that the American public school is now the most successful social enterprise yet undertaken by any nation, but also that it is designed to become the people's university; that it is the chief hope of the American Experiment in democracy; that it is the one typical democratic institution which America has produced, non-partisan, non-sectarian, and non-exclusive; he discovers, in brief, that the public school community center is the American church of the religion of democracy and that as such it is worthy to command the major loyalty of all patriotic citizens.

## A COMMUNITY CENTER

The essential idea to keep in the foreground, if the community center and the community church are to become allies, and to fulfill their designed function and answer the one clear call in American life to-day, is the subject of the next and last chapter of this story.



## **IX**

### **THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY**

*Democracy is a spirit which, in so far as a spirit can be embodied in a creed, may be expressed by the statement that not only government, but wealth, education, art, literature, religion,—in a single word, life,—is, in the divine order, intended for the people, and, in the ultimate state of society, will be controlled and administered by the people for the benefit of all. Thus defined, democracy is not only a political opinion it is also a religious faith.*

LYMAN ABBOTT

## IX

### THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY<sup>1</sup>

MARK TWAIN's story "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" is at once humorous and philosophical. The serious purpose of the book is nowhere better exhibited than in the Yankee's way of dealing with a certain anchorite. This religious zealot had condemned himself to the treadmill practice of bending and unbending his body — bowing and rising — all day long, day after day, and year after year. That was his religion — his whole religion as he conceived it — and by its practice he had won for himself a reputation for transcendent piety. But to the hard-headed, practical Yankee this looked like a waste of energy, and he began to study how to utilize it and turn it to some good purpose. Accordingly he arranged a device by which the old ascetic was hitched to a sewing-machine, and as he continued to

<sup>1</sup> This book deals with the kind of institution which the Religion of Democracy requires for its successful operation. The kind of message which the Religion of Democracy requires would occupy a separate volume by itself. Such a book stating the nature and contents of the message expected of a community church will be needed in the immediate future.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

practice his religion he was made to turn the machine, and thus his piety was turned to some account. It would have been un-Yankee-like, if the inventor of this device had not labeled the goods, thus produced, "The Saint Stylites Brand," and so commanded a higher price for them. And I assume this is what he did.

Mark Twain's humor is usually an effective weapon and he never used it in behalf of a nobler cause than when he turned it against mediæval asceticism. For the distinction between sacred and secular, which is the root cause of all asceticism, ancient and modern, has always been the most damaging handicap of the church, is to-day the arch-enemy of the religion of democracy, and constitutes the chief delusion through which men have been persuaded to endure religious, political, and economic tyranny. Unless we can banish this distinction from our minds, all discussion of the religion of democracy will be meaningless, and no such thing as a community church or community center is possible.

I call it a delusion, because it has no existence in fact. It is solely a fiction of the imagination, born out of fear, cowardice, selfishness, or ignorance. What we usually mean by "secular" is the thing we do when God is not looking, but the Christian position is that there is no thing we do when God is not looking. There can be

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

no escape from this position unless we assume that God is either asleep or dead. The Christian idea is that God is not only not dead, but that He is a democrat and has not withdrawn himself in selfish isolation from any living thing, for whose existence He is responsible and in whose welfare He is obliged to be interested.

While the distinction between the sacred and secular is not a fact but a fiction, yet it has been a powerful agency for doing damage. It is curious that the things which have done almost as much damage to human life as any other are those things which have no existence in fact. Of all such delusions I think this is the worst, and the responsibility for it rests upon the church. There is almost no important activity of life on which the false distinction of secular and sacred has not laid its blighting touch; religion, education, politics, economics. It began with the most precious institution existing, the family, which is older than the church or state and more important than either. This institution, which more than any other deserves to be called "sacred," is called "secular," thus reversing the standard of values by which God intended it to be estimated. It invented the vicious doctrine of the "immaculate conception," which degraded the idea of love, and contradicts the obvious facts of nature, that the birth of every

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

child conceived in love is immaculate. This doctrine is an insult to the pure-minded mother of every man, and likewise an insult to God, who made the world as it is and doubtless thinks it was a good piece of work. This same delusion originated the custom of the celibacy of the clergy, which is a very good thing for the selfish prosperity of the church as an institution, but a very bad thing for the Kingdom of God. It put a stigma on family life and stimulated the impression that it is a lower order of life, whereas the family is the only organic institution we have; that is, the only one not invented by man, the only one of which God may be said to be the author. If there could have been devised a better method by which to give to men and women moral and spiritual development, and to introduce them to the joy and beauty of life, than by giving them the honor of becoming the parents of a little child, I have not discovered what it is.

This same delusion caused the best men and women to withdraw from family life and shut themselves up in monasteries and nunneries. The withdrawal of men and women from family life not only caused the utmost cruelty and ingratitude, but the voluntary virginity of monks, nuns, and priests was an irreparable damage to the moral progress of the race. It prevented the morally capable and permitted the morally in-

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

capable to propagate their kind. The French Arnaulds, for example, all but one embraced the monastic state, so that all later Arnaulds are his descendants and he a scapegrace. It is an efficient plan for the survival of the morally unfittest. The type of goodness that makes the "best" men and women childless is a misnomer and ought to be called treason to society.

The damage which the false distinction of "sacred" and "secular" has done to family life is typical of the damage it has done and is doing to other social relationships. It not only divorced idealism from love and honor from family life, but it has divorced religion from politics, science from theology, education from daily vocations, dignity from labor, moral values from economics, art from life, and joy from religion. It has, in short, given us a departmental religion and a departmental God. It largely accounts for the whole mass of theological superstition which has blinded the church to its true mission. It explains why the church has used the cross of Christ as the symbol of a dogma to guarantee safety in a future world rather than as the battle-flag of the cause of democracy. The same impulse which led Christian men and women to withdraw themselves from the world and shut themselves up in monasteries and nunneries in the Dark Ages, and thereby make them darker, is the same impulse

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

which now leads the sectarian churches to stand aloof from the activities of human life.

It is true that some church officers have prevented the churches from applying religion to questions of social justice because it would interfere with their vested interests, and to accomplish their purpose they have utilized the delusion of the "sacred" and the "secular" as a convenient and effective weapon. I hate to think that human nature can be so mean as this, and yet my experience with such men compels me to draw this conclusion. But the great majority of men who desire to keep the church aloof from life do so because they feel keenly the sordidness of political and commercial life and want to preserve the church from contamination, so that they may use it as a peaceful refuge. This explains why sensible, clear-thinking business men in every other respect will nevertheless accept any kind of mystic doctrine or theological superstition which the church gives them, however absurd it may be. This is the reason why some of the leading men in my church objected to the application of Christian principles to social questions. The president of my board of trustees accurately stated the position of such men when he said 'he did not want his religion mixed with economics.' During the period of conflict with my church I tested this tendency by an

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

experiment. I preached a short series of sermons on such questions as "heaven," "the beatific vision," "our desired haven in the next world." The man who did not want his religion mixed with his economics was perfectly delighted with them and took pains to tell me so. He was entirely willing that I should lead him anywhere I pleased, so long as I led him as far away as possible from the world in which we are now living. The issue is clear-cut. The conflict between a departmental religion and the religion of democracy is an irreconcilable conflict.

The withdrawal of many thousands of the best men and women of the mediæval period from the world to monastic religious activities was a confession of weakness, a frank acknowledgment that the world was too strong for them, an obvious display of cowardice, an open confession of their belief that the world was bound for hell, and that the best thing for them to do, however selfish it might seem, was to devise a plan for saving themselves. The withdrawal of the church to-day from politics and economics is precisely the same sort of cowardice. It may be that the world is going to hell, although I believe nothing of the kind, but even if it is going to hell, it is our business to go with it. If a ship with precious souls on board is sinking, it is the business of the officers to stay by to the end and if need be go down with

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

the ship. If the world is evil, that is no sufficient reason for leaving it, but quite the contrary, it is the reason why we should stay with it. Ascetic Christianity called the world evil and left it. The religion of democracy even more keenly perceives that the world is evil, but it attempts to change it. It is the difference between cowardice and courage.

I am convinced that the religious issue of the immediate future will not be between conservative and liberal opinion, but between conservative and progressive action. Many theological problems of the past are unsettled. They will remain so, because they have been outgrown. Men are no longer sufficiently interested in them to discuss them. They are unimportant, even if true. The issue is now drawn between the men on one side, who regard the Christian religion as a guarantee of safety in a future world and a polite ornament in this one, and the men on the other side, who honestly desire to apply the principles of Jesus and establish democracy in this world. The real conflict is between the Bunyan conception of Christian, who flees from the wicked city to save himself, and the New Testament conception of Christian, who remains in the city to help save others. It is a repetition of the ancient and oft-repeated conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus. A democrat who takes Jesus for his model will

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

make no attempt to organize a religious society apart from the secular order. His aim is to organize the secular order on a religious basis.

This is the issue with which the religion of democracy challenges us. If any one wishes to see this issue embodied in living form, let him read Ward's "Life and Letters of Cardinal Newman" and Trevelyan's "Life of John Bright," which have recently appeared. These two men lived in the same century, in the same country, and for a portion of the time were identified with the same city. They were both Christians, both men of genius, both national leaders, and yet the circle of their interests and activities never intersected. While Bright, with his brilliant and consecrated eloquence, was leading the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws, Newman was writing in his journal, "The simple question is, can I be saved in the English Church? Am I in safety were I to die to-night?" These men lived in two different worlds. In Bright's biography no single reference is made to Newman; and in Newman's biography there is no reference to Bright, although he was the most eloquent champion of social justice in the century. Newman's motto was, "Thy will be done." Bright's was, "Trust God and fear not." One was devoted to the development of his own character; the other was devoted to the common welfare. These men

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

ought to have been enlisted as comrades in a common cause, and it is the false distinction of the “sacred” and the “secular” that dug the gulf between the two worlds in which they lived. If I were asked which of these two men were the more Christian, and if the New Testament were taken as the standard of judgment, I would unhesitatingly say, John Bright. With his beautiful young wife lying dead in his home, himself stricken with grief, a grief out of which was born the vision of thousands of homes all over England under the shadow of similar sorrows because of insufficient food, and then, with the sacred memory of his wife in his heart, consecrating himself to the common welfare and entering upon his public career to do heroic service for the poor and oppressed, is it not obvious that John Bright did what Jesus would have done under like circumstances?

But did not Bright enter the sphere of politics? Certainly. Why not? The fact that it is difficult for us to associate politics with the highest religious service only demonstrates the necessity of doing the thing I am now insisting upon; that is, to banish from our minds the distinction between the “sacred” and the “secular.” Unless we can do so once and for all, there is no hope of understanding the A B C of the religion of democracy. An open mind does not mean one which extends hospitality only to

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

new ideas, but to true ideas. It means an uncorrupted mind, one that sees life as it is, a mind freed from delusions. No one can see life as it is, no one can be a democrat, until he frees his mind of the delusion of the "sacred" and the "secular." This is the hardest of all delusions to banish, but the most essential to free ourselves of, if we hope to acquire the spirit of democracy.

The supreme aim of the religion of democracy is the achievement of freedom. This is likewise the goal of all endeavor in human history, and the one subject on which the entire Bible is written. In the process of achieving freedom, the place to begin is with the mind. For freedom is first of all a state of mind. No one can give it to another. Moses did not free a race of slaves in Egypt. He gave them a chance to free themselves, and most of them failed to take it. Freedom is not a dower, but an achievement. If, then, we acquire free minds, the first thing we shall discover is that this world is one piece of goods; that it is all sacred; that it belongs to God; that all of life's activities are concerned with human welfare; that politics, economics, labor are moral and religious questions; that they are worthy spheres for the religious man to enter; that if an institution calling itself a church does not enter them, it is not a true church, but disloyal to the Kingdom of God, which covers the whole of life and not a part of

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

it. When a man has become a free man—that is, when he has got so far as to free his mind of the ancient delusion of “sacred” and “secular”—he will see that politics and economics ought to be labeled “sacred,” if they are labeled anything at all, and he will see that it is his first duty as a democrat to liberate religion, politics, and economics from the stigma which this ancient delusion has put upon them, just as we have already freed the family from the stigma which the church put upon it. Not only so, but he will discover that he must actively engage in politics, if he hopes to retain his freedom or help other men to acquire it.

Socrates, who discovered the principle of human liberty, began with a study of the mind and took for his motto, “Know thyself.” He had the courage to carry out thought to its implications. When men in general do the same, then thought will have an authority binding upon all alike and it will replace the authority of the old external gods. This principle of freedom was hostile to the ancient state, and therefore Socrates was put to death as an atheist, although he was the most sincerely religious man in Athens. The experience of Socrates, which was paralleled by that of Jesus and a multitude more, is sufficient to show that if there is to exist freedom of thought and especially freedom in its expression, there must exist

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

also a degree of political liberty. Either to secure or retain it, therefore, all friends of freedom must engage actively in the field of politics. Why should a thing so obvious need discussion? Why should it shock so many men to-day to name politics and religion as allies? Why should one denomination of Christians go so far as to make it an article of its creed that their members shall not even vote in a state election? It is because the delusion about "sacred" and "secular" has corrupted the word "politics," and, what is worse, the thing for which it stands. So that large numbers of people to-day have the same attitude of selfish aloofness to it that a certain woman in Philadelphia expressed in a letter written on July 5, 1776, the day after the Declaration of Independence was adopted. She wrote, "Yesterday at the State House they passed what is called a Declaration of Independence, but I was not there, for I believe no respectable people were present." Indeed! Jefferson, Franklin, and Madison not respectable! It would be highly interesting to know what she meant by "respectable," if it could not be applied to the men who with the religious passion of crusaders were engaged in the business of politics for the sake of achieving human liberty.

The word "politics" is a Dr.-Jekyll-and-Mr.-Hyde word. Its true meaning has been lost and must be recovered. Its original meaning is

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

public-mindedness, public business. It is the art of so directing society as to produce the greatest good for mankind. We have traveled a long distance from this conception of Plato and Aristotle, who agreed in thinking that it is the highest art man can aspire to possess. Politics has come to be a synonym for partisanship, a scramble for offices, a selfish use of public resources. We can no longer use the word "politics" without attaching to it a qualifying adjective to indicate what we mean. We have an adjective which describes its present meaning, namely, "partisan," which means prejudice, selfishness, antagonism, a closed mind. But if we search for an adjective the opposite of "partisan," we shall search in vain. No such word has yet been coined. We have only got so far as to use the negative expression "non-partisan politics." It is like the stage before the term "automobile" was invented, when all we could say was the "horseless carriage." To express the contrast between the false and true idea of politics, the best we can do is to use such phrases as "private-minded politics" and "public-minded politics," or "partisan politics" and "community politics."

But rather than waste time in trying to coin a suitable adjective, which ought to be unnecessary, it is better to redeem the word "politics," and make it carry its own true meaning. Per-

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

haps the use of the adjective “social” before it will help to redeem it, but the only way in which it can be made a term of honor is by redeeming the thing for which it stands. This can be done only by the enlistment of a larger number of honorable men in the public service. So shall we make politics mean what it meant to the prophet-statesmen of the Hebrew Republic, who maintained that its root principle is righteousness. So shall we make it mean what it meant to our Puritan forefathers, who put their conception of it in the freeman’s oath of 1634: “I do solemnly bind myself that I will caste my vote as I shall judge in mine own conscience may best conduce to the public weal, so help me God.” So shall we make it mean what it meant to Pericles who said to the young men of Athens: “We regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless, but as a useless character.” From the standpoint of the religion of democracy, politics and religion are inseparable. The state needs to be wedded to religion to save its soul, and religion needs to be wedded to the state to save its sanity. Politics is not a trade, but a duty. A fundamental obligation rests on every man to make politics one of his major interests, not only that he may serve the common welfare, but because spiritual freedom rests on political freedom.

As soon as he acquires a slight experience in

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

politics, he will discover that very little political freedom is possible, unless there is also economic freedom. Therefore economics must be made his next major interest. Whenever one group of men acquires great wealth and becomes economically strong, and another group becomes economically weak, the strong group will always control the machinery of government and dictate laws to protect their own interests. Oliver Cromwell once wrote to parliament, 'If there be any one that makes many poor to make a few rich, that suits not a commonwealth.' It not only does not suit a commonwealth, but it makes a commonwealth in any true sense impossible. In 1890, one per cent. of the families of the country owned one half of the aggregate wealth of the country — more than all the rest of the nation put together! It is idle to suppose that this group of one per cent. will be content with one per cent. of the political power. As a matter of fact, they have not been. They have bought and sold legislation as they would cotton cloth.

When an effort was made to have enacted in Albany the Mercantile Inspection Law, a humane law to provide seats and sanitary accommodations for female clerks in New York department stores, the bill was defeated for several years by a lobby of merchants. During that period many articles against it appeared in a certain New York newspaper, and orders

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

were sent down from the counting-room of this same newspaper to permit no article in its favor to appear, and such articles were therefore rejected. Thomas Jefferson well said that 'when newspapers are controlled by money, then they are a most dangerous factor in a Republic.' When this bill was finally passed in spite of opposition, its same enemies so thwarted its administration that it speedily became a dead letter. Whenever selfish special interests dominate the making of laws, thwart their administration, and distort intelligent public opinion, the political democracy ceases to exist.

The illustration of this fact used by Rauschenbusch is the interference of President Roosevelt in the great coal strike a few years ago, which was hailed as a demonstration that the people are still supreme, but which he thinks rather demonstrated that the supremacy of the people is almost gone. The country was on the verge of a vast public calamity. A sudden cold snap would have sent Death through our Eastern cities, not with his old-fashioned scythe, but with a modern reaper. The President merely undertook to advise and persuade, and was met with an almost insolent rejoinder. Jacob A. Riis said that the President, when he concluded to interfere, set his face grimly, and said: 'Yes, I will do it. I suppose that ends me; but it is

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

right and I will do it.' The Governor of Massachusetts afterward sent him 'the thanks of every man, woman, and child in the country.' The President replied: 'Yes, we have put it through. But heavens and earth! It has been a struggle.' What is this sinister power whose selfish interests can take precedence of the safety of the people, so that a common-sense action by the first officer of the nation is likely to bring upon him political ruin? Is there an invisible government back of the government at Washington, which can prevent it from doing public service? It is clear that economic inequalities naturally produce political inequalities. There can be no real political democracy so long as patriotic sentiments are replaced by selfish economic interests. A political democracy can exist only where there is either approximate economic equality or else where economic inequality is regulated by a stronger, nobler spirit than self-interest. That stronger, nobler spirit is industrial democracy. To achieve industrial democracy is the next pressing problem and the inspiring opportunity which the religion of democracy faces.

It was a fundamental definition which Walt Whitman expressed when he said: "I speak the pass-word primeval. I give the sign of democracy. By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

terms." Is this the language of religion or the language of economics? It is not possible to say that it is either one or the other. It is both, and they are one and the same thing. In the center of Copenhagen's chief thoroughfare stands a plain obelisk called "Friheds Stotte," the liberty monument. It was erected to commemorate the freeing of the serfs in 1788. On one side of the monument is the inscription: "The King saw that Civic Freedom fixed in righteous law gives Love of Country, Courage for its Defence, Desire for Knowledge, Longing for Industry, Hope of Prosperity." On the other side of the monument is the inscription: "The King bade that Serfdom should cease, that to the Land Laws should be given Order and Might; that the free peasant may become brave and enlightened, industrious and good, an honorable citizen in happiness." So far as these two inscriptions can be classified, we may say that one is the expression of religion, the other the expression of politics and economics. It would be truer to say that each of the inscriptions is the expression of all three elements. Democracy is a rope, a life-line, a binding cord, woven of three strands, religion, politics, and economics. They are interwoven and must not be separated, if we ever expect to succeed in binding human society together on the basis of friendship. It is precisely because these strands

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

have been torn apart by the delusion of "sacred" and "secular," that a society on the basis of friendship, that is, a democracy, has not yet been created.

Mazzini said that "the man who discovers the religion of democracy will save the world." What does Mazzini mean by "discover"? Obviously he does not use it in the sense of invent or originate. For he clearly understood that the religion of democracy was born nineteen centuries ago. Jesus was the first true democrat, as Dekker said He was the first true gentleman. The world was almost eighteen hundred years in arriving at the idea of democracy embodied in that notable document of human wisdom, the Declaration of Independence, but a true picture of democracy was long ago exhibited to the world when the most influential democrat of history was born in a cave, cradled in a manger, and visited by workingmen.

Jesus drew in the sentiments of democracy with his mother's milk. We have preserved for us one of the songs with which his mother nourished his mind as a child:

"My soul doth magnify the Lord;  
My spirit has rejoiced in God, my Saviour;  
He hath put down princes from their throne,  
And hath exalted them of low degree.  
The hungry he hath filled with good things;  
And the rich he hath sent empty away."

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

This democratic song anticipates the day when the proud shall be put down and the lowly shall be exalted, and all unjust sufferers shall come to their own. It is the expression of the hope for a reversal of human values and the revival of a new standard of greatness. King Robert of Sicily recognized the revolutionary ring in Mary's song, and thought it well that the "Magnificat" should be sung only in Latin, so that its real meaning might be kept concealed from the people.

With his mind nourished by such sentiments, it is easy to understand why Jesus as a man expelled the traders from the Temple in Jerusalem. His act was a protest against graft and financial oppression. With his heart touched, as any man of fine feeling would be touched by the anxious economies of the poor, He struck a blow at the cruel avarice of the Pharisees who made millions by cornering the market on the Temple supplies and laid heavy burdens on shoulders least able to bear them.

Jesus' democracy is accurately stated in the announcement of his programme in his inaugural address:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because He has anointed me to proclaim good  
news to the *poor*;  
He has sent me to announce release to the prison-  
ers of *war*

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

And recovery of sight to the blind:  
To send away free those whom *tyranny* has  
crushed,  
To proclaim the *year* of acceptance with the Lord.'

Who are these captives and poor and blind and bruised? It is true that a man is a captive who is a slave to his own sin. But this cannot possibly exhaust the meaning or limit the application of Jesus' programme. For there are countless captive and bruised men whose bruises and slavery are not due to their own wrongdoing. How and where is Jesus' democracy to be applied to-day? It seems clear that if any man makes an honest attempt to apply it he must include, among the bruised and captive, the coal miners who live away from the light of the sun, the men who work in iron mills, the women and children in cotton and woolen mills, the toilers everywhere whose bodies and souls alike are bruised and whose lives are prematurely shortened by their toil. If the religion of Jesus is to be applied at all, it must touch the daily problem of our work-a-day world. Salt has very little value if kept in barrels; it must be applied to the thing that needs it most.

The word "discover" literally means to uncover. If Mazzini meant that the religion of democracy as stated by Jesus needs to be uncovered, needs to have removed from it the layers of misinterpretation which have hidden

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

it from the people, I heartily agree with him. For I believe the memorabilia of Jesus are the least-known documents now in print. But I think He meant something more than this. The significant word in his statement is not only the word "discover," but also the word "religion." He meant that what is needed to save the world is to charge democracy with religious insight and religious passion; that is, to make democracy to be a religion, so that it may have sufficient dynamic to be put into operation. This would make religion to be not an appendix to life, as it is now generally regarded, but an organic part of life, or, more accurately still, the whole of life. It would at once remove the chief obstacle to the progress of democracy, the delusive distinction between "secular" and "sacred."

There is no more widespread or more stupid blunder than to suppose that because democracy concerns itself so deeply with economics and politics, it therefore neglects the higher spiritual interests of man. Quite the contrary is the fact. It is a significant fact that Newman, who was a religious egotist, depended for guidance in spiritual matters upon external autocratic authority, while Bright, who lost himself in devotion to the social and economic welfare of the people, depended for guidance upon the Inner Light. He was a mystic in the true sense.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

Bright is typical of all democrats. A democrat is both a mystic and a secularist, as were Moses and Mazzini. Their mysticism was not an artificial pious exercise, but the ability to recognize life's real spiritual values. The religion of democracy is not a separate, airtight compartment, but a divine spirit that pervades all of life's activities. This is a vital distinction. The real secularist is not the man who is willing to suffer to secure higher wages, that there may be some margin for the education of his children; the real secularist is the man who thinks that the question of wages involves only the law of supply and demand. It is stupid blindness to facts to suppose that the demand made by industrial workers is only a demand for higher wages or shorter hours. It is a demand for conditions in which human life can be made worth living. The issue at stake is moral.

The basic principle, then, of the religion of democracy is this: that democracy is a religion; that religion, politics, and economics are one piece of goods; that every big question between men is at once both a religious and an economic question; that it is no more possible to divorce politics and morals and expect them to be what they ought to be than it is to separate oxygen and hydrogen and still have water; that, as Henry George expresses it, "the true law of social life is the law of love, the law of liberty,

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

the law of each for all and all for each; that the golden rule of morals is also the golden rule of the science of wealth; that the highest expressions of religious truth include the widest generalizations of political economy." Whoever sees this sees the heart of the religion of democracy, as Mazzini saw it and gave his life in its behalf.

But democracy is not only a religion, an ideal, a spirit, a cry for justice, a passion for brotherhood. It is also a method of procedure. It is not only a feeling for men, but a method of government. I have dwelt at length on the goal of the religion of democracy because, as Henderson truly says, "If one does not know where one wants to go, there is little chance of success in devising a process for getting there." It is equally true that, after one decides where he wants to go, there is little chance of success in getting there unless he can discover or devise a process adapted to his purpose. If the religion of democracy is to be put into effective operation, the two indispensable requirements are education and organization. It was the practical statesmanship of Havelock Ellis which led him to say, "If democracy means a state in which every man shall be a freeman, neither in economic, nor intellectual, nor moral subjection, two processes are at least necessary to render democracy possible — on the one hand, a large

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

and many-sided education; on the other, the reasonable organization of life." There is a fundamental sense in which it may with truth be said that the religion of democracy is education. The goal of democracy is the achievement of freedom from every sort of tyranny, outward and inward. The pathway to this achievement is knowledge. Knowledge is acquired through education. Education in its true sense means not only the ability to organize knowledge, making it available for use, but also to vitalize knowledge with a moral motive power so that it becomes felt knowledge, the wisdom and courage to apply it to human uses. Centuries ago the greatest of statesmen and greatest of democrats said, 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.' In the judgment of Jesus the guarantee of freedom is knowledge. The same conviction was repeatedly expressed and emphasized by the founders of the American Republic: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Franklin. Lowell expressed their sentiments when he said, "The opening of the first grammar school was the opening of the first trench against monopoly in church and state; the first row of trammels and pothooks, which the little Shearjashubs and Elkanahs blotted and blubbered across their copy-books, was the preamble to the Declaration of Independence."

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

It goes without saying that public opinion, when educated, in order to be effective, must be organized. One man can chase a thousand, but two men can chase not twice one thousand, as arithmetic figures it, but ten thousand men, as experience demonstrates it. In the slow evolution of the story of government, five forms have in turn held sway. Imperialism, the rule of the master over the slave; feudalism, the rule of the lord over the vassal; paternalism, the rule of the king by divine (?) right over his subjects; aristocracy, the rule of the privileged few over the unprivileged many; democracy, the rule of brother citizens over themselves. The fact of which we are now becoming conscious is that there can be no such thing as the rule of brother men over themselves without *education* and *organization*. We have discovered that our greatest need from a moral, economic, and political standpoint is organized community coöperation; that such coöperation can be achieved only through popular education; and that education is a life-process of self-help to be pursued, not apart from, but through, daily vocations; not an appendix of life, but an organic part of it.

The two outstanding needs of democracy, then, are education and organization. How shall these needs be met? Among the many challenging and revolutionary facts which this criminal

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

World War has revealed in lurid light, the two which have prime importance are, first, the world's tragic need of the religion of democracy; second, the church's tragic failure to meet this need. In view of these facts the fundamental necessity in every country in the world is to discover or invent an instrument through which it can make the religion of democracy operate, since the church has demonstrated its inefficiency and revealed its disloyalty to its avowed purpose. I mourn its failure. I am willing to do all I can to help it become an ally of democracy. I would wish to see the church perform again its natural and virile functions such as it performed during the rise of the Dutch Republic and the planting of the New England colonies, when it made its bond of union the bond of fellow citizenship, and out of secular society created a new political order. But the church is now so dominated by money, dogma, and sectarianism that I have no hope that it will perceive its opportunity or that it has the courage to meet it if it does see it. While taking the most sympathetic attitude to any effort the church may make, where shall we find an instrument which we can be sure is suited to our purpose? Fortunately, through the guiding Providence of God in human history, the United States has ready to its hand an instrument perfectly designed to meet democracy's needs.

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

It is the free American common school, the most democratic institution ever organized in any age or nation. It was not imported from Europe, but created by America for the express purpose of bringing to a successful issue her great experiment in democracy. The two fundamental needs, *education* and *organization*, will be met when the free public school takes the next logical step in the development of its own purpose and becomes a *people's university* and a *community capitol*.

For this reason I have left the service of a sectarian church and expect to devote my life to the task of helping the public school to become the church of the religion of democracy, to make the schoolhouse the power-house, the nerve center of a genuine community, bound together by an organic common purpose, to develop every school district into what Professor Royce calls "a beloved community," and which he rightly maintains is the supreme task of Christianity, and the chief need of human life. I believe that my action in going from the church to the schoolhouse is typical of the present evolutionary movement in the progress of the Kingdom of God. I believe it is much wiser to work for the religion of democracy through the community center than to attempt to convert the church to Christianity, just as the Greeks, when they became better than their

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

gods, preferred to worship Jesus rather than undertake to convert Zeus. I have, therefore, accepted a position in the United States Bureau of Education, as special agent in community organization, to assist in the development of the public schools of America into community capitols. It is a particular satisfaction to be a pioneer in such a project. It has not only solved my personal problem, but it has given me a pulpit such as I had never expected to have. The opportunity it affords to serve the cause of democracy is limited only by my strength and ability. My parish is the United States. My cause is democracy. My opportunity for service is boundless.

The call to enter a service of this high order is a call not to the leaders alone, but to all. Because it ought to be carefully noted that the religion of democracy is a laymen's religion, just as the Christian religion was originally designed to be, and in fact continued to be until it was captured by alien forces. The twelve assistants whom Jesus chose were all laymen, not a priest among them, and most of them workingmen. The descriptive title He gave them was "apostle," literally meaning "one that is sent." It occurs over fifty times in the New Testament. The Greek word was taken bodily into the English language and with one exception has never been translated. The Eng-

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

lish word for it is "missionary." If this title were to be translated, it would reveal at once the democratic nature of the Christian religion. We should read, for example, "Jesus chose twelve whom He named missionaries." The true apostolic succession, therefore, is a succession, not of ecclesiastical dignitaries, but of laymen who have a missionary passion for democracy. This is one of the most constructive and distinctive features in the religion of democracy. Professor Shaler, of Harvard, might well remark that "if Aristotle were to wake up in the twentieth century, what he would be most amazed at would not be our free government—the germs of that were in his own; nor our discoveries in science—these had been foreshadowed by the philosophers of his own day; nor our wonderful inventions—these have depended on the development of a few general principles. What would astound him most would be a missionary; the idea of devotion and self-sacrifice for the people of another nation would be entirely new to the ancients, whose sympathy stopped with their own country." A missionary of the religion of democracy extends his sympathy not only to other nations than his own, but, what is a far more difficult thing, he extends it to other sects and classes and races in his own nation. The success of democracy depends upon every friend of it becoming

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

in his own community a missionary in its behalf.

To be a missionary of democracy is very difficult business, indeed. The ideal of democracy is the hardest of all ideals to operate, just because it is the highest of all ideals. If it were not difficult, it would not be interesting or worth while. But a man, especially if he has a wife and babies dependent on him, ought to understand the difficulty of the task, and the extraordinary courage it requires to face it, and also the rare ecstasy of joy in store for him, if he does. With keen insight and a fine sense of humor Charles Ferguson remarks, "*Sic transit gloria mundi*; seeing that the world is so badly governed, what is left for a man of spirit but to believe in God and to be honest?" To believe in God and to be honest are radical and dangerous things to do, but they are high adventures of the spirit, which appeal to all true men.

To promote the religion of democracy is dangerous business. It is certain to invite the determined hostility of vested interests. There is an irreconcilable conflict between it and them. The man who enlists in the cause must be willing to pay the price. To be half-hearted is futile; to be whole-hearted is dangerous.

"The proverb old still runs its course;  
Bend willingly to greater force!  
If you are bold, and face the strife,  
Stake house and home and then — your life!"

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

There are two ways of being independent of fear; one is by being independently rich, the other by being independently poor. If a man is willing to be independently poor, then he is partly prepared to be a soldier of the common good. He is altogether prepared, if, in addition, he is willing to trust in God. Trust in God is another name for courage. Trust in God is necessary not only to supply him with courage, but to solace his loneliness, for almost all the "best" people will be against him and will take pains to let him know it. Gladstone, whose long and honorable public service makes his testimony highly significant, said:

In almost every one, if not in every one, of the greatest political controversies of the last fifty years, whether they affected the franchise, whether they affected commerce, whether they affected religion, whether they affected the bad and abominable institution of slavery, or whatever subject they touched, these leisure classes, these educated classes, these titled classes, have been in the wrong.

To oppose these powerful and intrenched classes in behalf of the poor, the oppressed, the enslaved, the broken-hearted, usually means for the man who undertakes it, what it meant for Jesus: hardship, loneliness, persecution, and the loss of a position, as I have discovered in my own experience. I have also discovered that it means an ecstasy of joy not otherwise obtainable.

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

A democrat is on good terms with God. In periods of apparent failure for the cause in behalf of which he labors, he says, as Lowell did in a similar experience: "I have great comfort in God. I think he is considerably amused sometimes, but on the whole loves us and would not let us get at the match-box, if he did not know that the frame of the universe was fire-proof." He knows that the principles on which the world is built are fireproof; that ultimately they are irresistible; that the stars in their courses are fighting in behalf of democracy. However tragic has been the story of liberty, he knows the story of the fight has been a divine comedy. It has had a good ending. If sometimes the way of freedom seemed like a tunnel, we perceive that it has been for the most part a tunnel with an up grade. The pioneers who to-day attempt to add a new chapter to this inspiring story are gladdened by the consciousness that there never has been a period in human history nor a country in the world in which the prospects for the triumph of freedom were brighter than they are to-day in America, a prospect intensely brightened by the glaring need for democracy revealed by the World War and which is the conspicuous silver lining to the war's black clouds. The prospect of meeting this world-need is bright in America, because the national religion of the United States is the re-

## THE RELIGION OF DEMOCRACY

ligion of democracy, its temple is the free public school, its emblem is the flag.

The spirit of America is the dominant desire to be democratic; to be public-minded; to show mental hospitality to new ideas; to differ in opinion without differing in feeling; to accentuate the resemblances, not the differences, among men; to play fair in politics and industry; to exhibit true sportsmanship; to be victor without arrogance, a loser without resentment; to demand no special privileges; to accept nothing which all other men may not have on the same terms; to honor honest work; to recognize no superiority except that of intelligence and character; to give to all a fair chance in the race of life, a chance to achieve freedom. It is the spirit of the hive, the spirit of coöperation, the community spirit. It is this spirit of which we are attempting to make the flag an emblem. To express our hope we have christened it "Old Glory," to suggest the cause which is as old as the glory of God, the religion of democracy. The unfinished business of America is to put into operation the religion of democracy, as it is expressed in her Declaration of Independence and in the Sermon on the Mount. For those who ardently desire the success of her experiment, it is good news of great joy that she is now in the process of discovering the school-house as the most efficient instrument through

## A COMMUNITY CHURCH

which to operate the religion of democracy and make it a constructive force for freedom. When the schoolhouse becomes the people's university and the community capitol, America's dream will be nearer fulfillment than it has ever been before in any age or nation. That the cause of the religion of democracy will ultimately triumph is not open to doubt in the mind of any man familiar with the story of liberty written in human history by the hand of God. The personal problem for every American is what part he will have in the triumph. The enterprise is such that it compels every man to take sides, to make his life either a challenge or a truce.

"Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou  
shalt stand,  
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust  
against our land?  
Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 't is Truth alone is  
strong,  
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her  
throng  
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all  
wrong."

THE END

## **APPENDICES**

- A. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CHURCH?**
- B. HOW TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY CHURCHES**
- C. HOW TO ORGANIZE A COMMUNITY CHURCH**
  - I. CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION**
  - II. CONSTITUTION**
  - III. BY-LAWS**

*"There is a true church wherever  
One hand meets another helpfully."*

JOHN RUSKIN

## **APPENDIX A**

### **WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CHURCH?**

FROM the author's point of view the seven cardinal virtues or distinguishing characteristics of a community church are as follows:

#### **I. FREEDOM FROM THE DOMINATION OF DOGMA, SUBSTITUTING INTELLIGENCE FOR IT.**

The community church, believing that an open mind is the basic condition of progress, abolishes all creeds. It believes a creed is morally wrong, because it puts a padlock on the intellect and prevents spiritual growth. It, therefore, frees itself from the limitation of creeds that it may acquire larger and firmer convictions. In the place of a creed it will substitute a declaration of principles, which states not its position but its purpose. It realizes the fact that men and women can agree on their goal, but never on their starting-point or on any one road leading to the goal. It, therefore, unites them on a working declaration of principles and recognizes the right of the individual to form his own convictions.

#### **II. FREEDOM FROM THE DOMINATION OF MONEY, SUBSTITUTING CHARACTER FOR IT.**

This means that in a community church a man's standing must not be determined by his contribu-

## APPENDIX

tion of money, but by character and intelligence. This principle has been openly violated so frequently by social institutions that the community church is under the necessity of making its position clear in pointed and practical fashion. It will not, therefore, dignify the place of money in its life by putting the control of it in a separate board of officers created for this special purpose. It will incorporate as a church and not as a business corporation. It will have one board of managers instead of two, and put its money affairs in the hands of a sub-committee of its board of managers. It does this, not only for the sake of efficiency, but in order to put first things first and second things second. It regards this, not as a detail in its organization, but as a fundamental principle among its ideals. It believes that unless it deliberately organizes itself in such a way as to put money in the background and keep it there, it cannot hope to succeed nor does it deserve to.

### III. FREEDOM FROM THE DOMINATION OF SECTARIANISM, SUBSTITUTING BROTHERHOOD FOR IT.

It is impossible for a sectarian church to be at the same time a community church. They are a contradiction in terms and it is morally wrong to use the term "community" as camouflage. The community church has no connection with any denomination and its minister is not a member of any sectarian organization. Sectarian labels are libels. They misrepresent the people who wear them. They have not only ceased to be true, but are unimportant even if true. But because men outgrow traditions slowly, and out of respect for personal associations and missionary interests, those members of a com-

## APPENDIX

munity church who wish it may, in addition to their membership in the community church, be members of a sectarian department of the church. As such they may hold special meetings and designate what missionary enterprise they wish their money to support. In the atmosphere of the community church, and as missionary agencies learn to coöperate, these sectarian departments will decline. It is wiser to give the people the chance to outgrow them than use any pressure which is sure to defeat its own purpose. The majority in most communities now do not wish any other label except "community." Those who do are merely asked, when they join the community church, to put the name of the army first and the name of the regiment second. This temporary compromise with present conditions is made because the shortest distance between two points is to pass through the intermediate points.

### IV. FREEDOM TO LIBERATE AND MAKE KNOWN THE RELIGION OF JESUS, RECOGNIZING IT WHETHER LABELED BY HIS NAME OR NOT.

Believing that religion is not a dogma, but an attitude to life, and that therefore it is a universal fact, the community church holds that its first and chief task is to be an interpreter of the meaning of life, to assist all people to acquire and maintain a normally right attitude to life, and to seek the removal of all causes which make such an attitude impossible. It seeks to accomplish its purpose by making known the religion of democracy as set forth in such documents as the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Lord's Prayer. Its ideals are conveniently described by the general term "Chris-

## APPENDIX

tian," although it clearly distinguishes the term "Christian" from the teachings of Jesus. It recognizes the fact that Jesus is the acknowledged leader of those forces in the Occident working for a better sort of world, and that He is the biggest asset of the religion of democracy.

Since it uses the name of Jesus, as He wished it to be used, only for the sake of the ideals in behalf of which He died a martyr, the community church eagerly recognizes other men as representatives of these ideals, such as Lincoln, Francis of Assisi, Moses, Socrates, Thomas Jefferson, William Penn, Confucius, Joseph Mazzini, John Ruskin, Stevenson, Livingstone, and John Bright, and a host of other "outside saints" who never heard the name of Jesus, but who are his allies, not his rivals. While more devoted to the religion of democracy than to any one of its representative men, it realizes that it is the exhibition of this religion in operation which makes it effective and contagious.

It realizes that while, as regards denominational sects, the term "Christian" is not a sectarian term, as regards other historic religions it is a sectarian term and is a limitation on the term "community." But it considers that its first duty is to abolish a few of the denominational sects within the Christian religion before it can sincerely attempt a larger task. Even within this limited field it entertains little hope that the undemocratically organized sects will respond to its appeal. If members of the "free churches," and those outside the churches, respond to this ideal, it is all that is humanly possible to expect at the present time. It is frankly admitted that the only accurate and honest use of the term "community," as applied to an organization, is its

## APPENDIX

use by a public school community center, but we believe the approximation to this ideal in the proposed community church is of such value to the common welfare as to justify its use. Since it is not a social club to furnish pleasure to any one class of people, but a church to meet the universal needs of all classes, it is hoped that the community church, by its future development, will add a richer and truer meaning to its name.

### V. FREEDOM TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY RATHER THAN ITSELF, LOSING ITS LIFE AS AN ORGANIZATION, IF NEED BE, FOR THE SAKE OF ITS CAUSE.

This principle seeks to apply to a church as well as to an individual the statement of Jesus, that "he that loseth his own life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." The community church, therefore, seeks first the interests of the community rather than its own. It realizes that this principle is easy to accept in theory and that the acid test of its sincerity is its willingness to apply it. The community church accepts this test. It will endeavor to stimulate the organization of community centers in the public schools. It adopts the policy that it will undertake no activity which can be conducted more efficiently by the community center. It will carry on such activities only when and so long as the community is unable or unwilling to undertake the task. While the community church realizes that its membership is not all-inclusive as in the community center, yet it has set for itself aims which are universal. On the basis of its policy to put the welfare of the nation above its own, it merits the support of all unselfish and patriotic citizens who are asked to serve it as a means to an end and not as an end in itself.

## APPENDIX

### VI. FREEDOM TO ORGANIZE DEMOCRATICALLY WITH THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, EACH MEMBER HAVING ONE VOTE.

The community church is based honestly on the right of self-determination. This means that its authority to organize is not derived from bishop, priest, or presbytery. It means that it has the right to incorporate, hold title to its own property, adopt its own constitution, fix its own standards, and direct its own activities as in its judgment may best serve the common welfare. It means that ecclesiastical machinery is made for the people, not the people for ecclesiastical machinery. The community churches, when formed, will therefore league themselves together, not for the purpose of creating an autocratic machine to exercise authority over them, but for the sole purpose of pooling their experiences, stimulating each other, and securing concerted action for moral ends. The individual community church adopts the policy of one member, one vote, and in all other ways its members show respect for the personalities of each other. Guided by the primary principle of the value and welfare of the individual, it is organized and operated from the bottom up, not from the top down.

### VII. FREEDOM TO WORK FOR WHATEVER CONCERNS HUMAN WELFARE, ABOLISHING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN "SECULAR" AND "SACRED."

The community church regards the distinction between "secular" and "sacred" as a mental illusion which has no existence in fact. It believes that God is not dead, and that religion is not a separate business set up apart from life, but a divine spirit

## APPENDIX

pervading all of its activities. It maintains, therefore, that no subject which concerns human welfare is foreign to religion, and that all such subjects are not only proper to be treated in its public teaching, but that it is its obvious duty to wed religion to life. For the same reason it maintains that men and women are more sacred than buildings of stone and wood, and that failure to use its buildings for any activity which the people's welfare requires is an economic waste which is morally wrong. It maintains that the spiritual and material welfare of the people are riveted together as one piece of goods and it places both its teaching and its practical activities at the service of the nation in its local community.

## APPENDIX B

### HOW TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY CHURCHES

(A SUGGESTED statement for the use of national, state, and local committees in the work of promoting community churches, based on the conclusions of a preliminary committee now at work on this enterprise.)

### ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY CHURCHES

#### DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

##### THE AIM.

The aim of the community church movement is to apply the democratic principle to organized religion and to give religion a recognized place in democratic enterprises; to enfranchise the individual and to create a social order more in harmony with the conscience and intelligence of the average man and with the principles of Jesus; and to this end it seeks to give expression to the religion of democracy existing in the common consciousness; to abolish the distinction between secular and sacred; to elevate public above private interests; to put into effective operation the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Sermon on the Mount; and to associate all individuals in mutual aid for the common welfare.

## APPENDIX

### THE AGENCY.

The instrument for achieving the above aim is distinguished by characteristics in keeping with its purpose.

As stated by one member of the committee the characteristics of a community church are as follows:

- (a) The community church is undenominational. It eliminates affiliation with any sectarian body whatsoever, in favor of identification with the community in which it is placed.
- (b) The community church is public. It accepts the universality of the religious instinct, and welcomes all men, regardless of sect, class, nation, or race, on a basis of membership identical with that of citizenship in the community.
- (c) The community church is free. It recognizes no creed, or statement of faith, but leaves all matters of theological belief to the unfettered thought and conviction of the individual.
- (d) The community church is social. It interprets religion in terms of social service, and dedicates its members to the fulfillment of social idealism.
- (e) The community church is democratic. It is organized on a basis of self-determination; recognizes a single constituency of members who are voters; and places its affairs in the hands of a board of managers responsible in all things to the congregation.
- (f) The community church is the community functioning spiritually. It emphasizes the community, and not the church, as the source of religious life, and itself as a free agent for the expression, not the control, of this life.

## APPENDIX

As stated by another member of the committee, a community church seeks:

- I. To express the common religious consciousness. It recognizes that all are religious by virtue of their being human, and all have the right and duty to express their religious nature sincerely. It is universal.
2. To insure liberty of thought and speech. It recognizes that questions of doctrine and of personal religious experience are properly matters of individual concern to be socially tested only by their social product. It is free.
3. To enlist all in the service of the common good. It recognizes the universal individual obligation in social welfare, and seeks to point out an avenue of usefulness to each member of the community. It is (a moral) dynamic.
4. To effect a religious organization amenable to the will of the community. However initiated or maintained it recognizes that each person must have a share in the organization untrammeled by aught but his own desire, that the ultimate control properly belongs to the entire population unit concerned and not to a selective group. It is democratic.

As stated by another member the seven cardinal virtues or distinguishing characteristics of a community church are as follows:

- I. Freedom from the domination of dogma, substituting intelligence for it.
- II. Freedom from the domination of money, substituting character for it.

## APPENDIX

- III. Freedom from the domination of sectarianism, substituting brotherhood for it.
- IV. Freedom to liberate and make known the religion of Jesus, recognizing it whether labeled by his name or not.
- V. Freedom to serve the community rather than itself, losing its life as an organization, if need be, for the sake of its cause.
- VI. Freedom to organize democratically with the right of self-determination, each member having one vote.
- VII. Freedom to work for whatever concerns human welfare, abolishing the distinction between secular and sacred.

### TWO PARALLEL AGENCIES.

It is highly significant that all the characteristics of a community church as thus stated are likewise descriptive of the community center. The only difference is a question of emphasis in one respect. That is with reference to religion. The activities of the community center exhibit religion in operation. A community church, in addition to such activities, would consciously organize the moral and religious motive. The aims of both are the same: one calls it the practice of democracy; the other, the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Both strenuously oppose any union of church and state, but both eagerly seek to wed religion and the nation.

These two agencies, therefore, are not rivals but allies; approaching the same task from different angles, each makes its distinctive contribution and

## APPENDIX

is in a position to do what the other cannot do. One is a public organization based on citizenship alone; the other is a volunteer organization based on membership. A public organization must necessarily operate on the basis of the lowest common denominator; it can only undertake what public opinion approves. But a volunteer organization can do pioneer work and stimulate new enterprises. A community church will seek to raise the common denominator of community action and will undertake no activity which can be better done through a public agency, but it will carry on such activities as a governmental agency cannot conduct and it will promote new progressive enterprises.

### AGREEMENT UPON THE GOAL.

It is essential that there be a clear conception of the goal aimed at, because unless we know where it is we want to go, it is useless to take steps for getting there. We may assume that we are agreed on three things as to our goal:

- (a) Organized self-help on the basis of citizenship, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the community center.
- (b) The conscious recognition of the religious motive in all concerted action for the common welfare, which is the distinguishing characteristic of a community church.
- (c) That these two organizations should move as nearly as possible along parallel lines and be allies in the common effort to supplement each other's work.

## APPENDIX

### FREEDOM FOR GROWTH.

While a clear goal is essential, a generous freedom as to the roads used in reaching it is equally essential. Neither the community center nor a community church is a finished stereotyped organism, but a living movement. Both are in the process of formation and both are still on trial. They will be what the people make them. They must be indigenous to the soil, otherwise they will be difficult to organize and impossible to keep organized after they are started. For this reason, this statement is merely suggestive. It represents the point of view of a few, who desire to promote the movement. All others interested in the movement should feel equally free to make constructive suggestions. Freedom for growth should be the avowed and settled policy of the movement, if it is to meet the varying needs of different communities.

To exhibit the policy of freedom in operation, three separate descriptions of a community church are included in this statement. No attempt is made at their reconciliation, because the movement should be encouraged to be a natural growth instead of an artificial creation. The three statements differ most interestingly in emphasis, but show remarkable agreement on essential principles and ultimate aims. The capacity to differ in opinion without differing in feeling is indispensable for successful community work. The two guarantees of success for the movement are an open mind and a friendly spirit.

### A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY.

It ought to be clearly understood that a community church is not a new denomination, but a new

## APPENDIX

church. It is not a federation or union of sects. Such a plan accentuates by recognition the very thing it seeks to abolish, and therefore fails just as the confederation of the American colonies failed in its purpose. A community church aims rather to weld various groups of Christians and individuals without any religious labels in such a way as to create a new kind of church, just as the union of the American colonies under the Constitution was more than a union of states; it was also the creation of a new nation.

The pronounced but unorganized sentiment in favor of the creation of this new type of church presents a golden opportunity to all those who labor for the success of America's experiment in democracy. Sectarian churches are now facing a problem more serious than any which has yet confronted them. They are also facing a golden opportunity. To think of their problem in terms of opportunity will transform their impending defeat into a progressive triumph.

We feel that it is not an exaggeration to say, as one member of our committee expresses it, that the community church is the great spiritual discovery of our age. It marks an epoch in the history of Christianity not dissimilar in character and importance to the Reformation. It moves from the individual to society as the center of religious life. It accepts the community in place of the denomination as the unit of spiritual integration. The community church liberates religion from the bondage of creeds. It delivers religion from the body of ecclesiastical death. It emancipates religion from the power of money. It makes the church at last a free agent of ethical and spiritual idealism.

## APPENDIX

All who believe in the principles of the movement, as thus stated, are invited to associate themselves together for the purpose of putting them into operation.

To THE OFFICERS:

President ..... Secretary.....;  
Vice-President..... Treasurer .....

I approve the above Declaration of Principles and accept membership in the Association.

Name.....

Date..... Address.....

Enclosed please find one dollar (\$1.00) for dues as a subscribing member for the present calendar year.

Name.....

Address.....

## APPENDIX C

### HOW TO ORGANIZE A COMMUNITY CHURCH

#### I. THE CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION.

The undersigned, all being citizens of the United States, of full age, and a majority of whom are citizens of the.....of....., State of....., desiring that they, their associates and successors, shall become a body politic, incorporated under the code of laws section ....., providing for the incorporating of societies formed "for mutual improvement and for benevolent, religious, and educational purposes," do hereby certify as follows:

*First*, that the name of such body corporate shall be The Community Church of....., and that the term for which it is organized shall be perpetual.

*Second*, that the object of said incorporation shall be to decrease the number of sects by absorbing them as departments in a community church, to prevent waste through the needless multiplication and rivalry of sectarian activities, to become worthy of the respect and loyalty of the large class of able and honest men now estranged from sectarian churches; to be a church more representative of the conscience and intelligence of Christian men and women, a church organized democratically, organized on the liberty of difference, and organized to

## APPENDIX

secure its freedom from the domination of dogma, money, and sectarianism; a church whose aim is to give Christianity according to Jesus a chance to be heard, to accentuate the resemblances among men by enlarging the basis of unity, to work for the prevention rather than the cure of social injustice, to mobilize forward-looking men and women through organized coöperation in behalf of the religion of democracy.

*Third*, that for the promotion of such object, the said corporation shall have the power to use a common seal and to change and alter the same at its pleasure; to hold property by bequest, gift, lease, or purchase, either absolutely or in trust for any of its purposes, that it may engage in any activities which it deems to be for the common welfare, provided that such activities shall not be for profit, but solely for common benefit.

*Fourth*, that the number of incorporators shall not be less than five, and that, when this certificate is signed and filed by them, they shall then have the power to organize, to elect officers, and to make a constitution and by-laws not inconsistent with this certificate of incorporation.

In witness whereof, the undersigned have made and signed the foregoing certificate of incorporation this.....day of....., 19.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## APPENDIX

### I

#### II. THE CONSTITUTION.

(Each community church is urged to draft its own constitution. This one is merely suggested by the author to indicate certain fundamental principles which he thinks should be embodied in such a document. He would be glad to receive copies of constitutions from community churches as they are formed and pass them on as suggestions to others.)

#### DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The First Community Church of.....  
recognizes religion as a universal human fact, as an attitude to life instead of a dogma, as the basic common denominator among men, and as an indispensable common need like love and sunshine. It aims to unite all citizens of this community for mutual aid in self-development through the discovery and practice of universal spiritual ideals as embodied in the real religion of Jesus and other teachers. It imposes on its members no confession of faith, but stimulates them to form their own personal and carefully considered convictions through untrammeled investigation and public discussion. It sets for itself the task of creating a social order more in harmony with the manifest purposes of God and with the conscience and intelligence of the people. It regards the community as the field of its labor and itself as a society of friends to be used as a force for the common welfare. It treats religion not as a separate business set up apart from life, but as a divine spirit pervading every activity of life. Its message is a challenge, not a truce; its ultimate authority in religion is the Inner Light; its only sanction in religion is the universal conscience; its working motto is each for all and all for each.

## APPENDIX

### II

#### SPIRITUAL AND MORAL STANDARDS— THE DECALOGUE

##### (a) *Moral principles.*

1. A useful knowledge of God.  
“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.”
2. A common-sense treatment of God.  
“Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image.”
3. Practicing what we profess.  
“Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah in vain.”
4. Leisure for personal growth.  
“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

##### (b) *A bill of particulars.*

5. Respect for parenthood.  
“Honor thy father and thy mother.”
6. Regard for the rights of person.  
“Thou shalt do no murder.”
7. Regard for the rights of family.  
“Neither shalt thou commit adultery.”
8. Regard for the rights of property.  
“Thou shalt not steal.”
9. Regard for the rights of reputation.  
“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”

##### (c) *The Nation's safeguard.*

10. Enjoyment without possession.  
“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.”

## APPENDIX

### III

#### SPIRITUAL AND MORAL IDEALS— THE BEATITUDES

##### (a) Personal qualities.

###### 1. Mental hospitality.

“Happy the poor in spirit!

For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”

###### 2. Internal resources.

“Happy the meek!

For they shall inherit the earth.”

###### 3. Self-control.

“Happy they who mourn!

For they shall be comforted.”

###### 4. Healthy dissatisfaction.

“Happy they who hunger and thirst for  
righteousness!

For they shall be satisfied.”

##### (b) Social qualities.

###### 5. Intelligent sympathy.

“Happy the merciful!

For they shall obtain mercy.”

###### 6. Respect for persons.

“Happy the pure in heart!

For they shall see God.”

###### 7. Capacity for coöperation.

“Happy the peacemakers!

For they shall be called the sons of God.”

###### 8. Public-mindedness.

“Happy they who have been persecuted on  
account of righteousness!

For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.”

## APPENDIX

### 9. A passion for justice.

"Happier they who give than they who receive!"

For their Father in Heaven shall compensate them."

## IV

### THE CONDITION OF MEMBERSHIP

"I do solemnly affirm that it is my purpose to exercise the courage necessary to help put into effective operation the Kingdom of God, and that to the best of my ability I will strive to understand and practice, to teach and defend the Constitution of this church."

### III. THE BY-LAWS.

#### ARTICLE I. MEMBERS

SECTION 1. Members become such by signing the constitution at a public meeting of the church.

SECTION 2. The membership of the church shall be limited to — in number, in order to preserve its homelike character, its democratic spirit, and its working efficiency.

#### ARTICLE II. MEETINGS

SECTION 1. The annual meeting shall be held on the — to elect officers, hear reports from all committees and departments of work, and transact such other business as may be necessary.

SECTION 2. In all elections the Preferential Ballot shall be used, and with reference both to officers and policies the Initiative, Referendum, and Recall shall be employed in such manner as the church itself may determine.

## APPENDIX

### ARTICLE III. OFFICERS

SECTION 1. The church is incorporated as a church, not as a society, and all its business shall be conducted by a single Board of Managers, who shall also be the Trustees of its property.

SECTION 2. The members of the Board of Managers may be women as well as men, and shall be not less than five nor more than fifteen in number. The minister and heads of departments shall, by virtue of their position, be members of the Board.

SECTION 3. The managers shall hold office for three years except that the original officers shall be divided numerically, as nearly as may be, into three classes; the first class to hold office for one year, the second class for two years, and the third class for three years. In every case they shall hold office until their successors shall be chosen.

SECTION 4. As soon after the annual meeting as may be convenient the managers shall meet to organize and shall elect from their own number a President, Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, who shall perform the duties usually performed by such officers.

### ARTICLE IV. FINANCES

SECTION 1. This church volunteers to pay taxes like any other private institution, in order to do no injustice to the majority of citizens who are not connected with any church.

SECTION 2. It is the policy of this church that no yearly contribution exceeding three hundred dollars shall be accepted from any one member, in order that a member's standing may be determined not by money, but by his character and intelligence.

## APPENDIX

**SECTION 3.** It is the policy of the church that the salary it offers its minister shall not be a definitely stated amount, but that a minimum and maximum wage be stipulated, so that the salary the minister receives shall be proportionate to the people's ability and the worth of his own services, and in order that there may be no annual deficit to compromise his own or the church's freedom.

### ARTICLE V. TENURE OF OFFICE

**SECTION 1.** It is the policy of this church that the minister's tenure of office shall rest on a dependable foundation rather than on the personal wishes of a few persons, and to this end it adopts the principle embodied in the civil service laws of the Federal Government, and it agrees that the minister shall not be dismissed unless the complaints against him are put into writing and that he be given the opportunity to answer them before an open meeting of the church, if he so desires.

**SECTION 2.** This church grants to its minister complete freedom to teach the principles and ideals of the Kingdom of God as he is given the light to interpret them, in order that the church may enjoy with him the new discoveries into which Jesus said the Spirit of Truth would guide his friends, and because it believes that teachers of a free people must themselves be free.

### ARTICLE VI. COÖPERATION

**SECTION 1.** Members of the church belonging to various sects may, if they so desire, retain their sectarian formation and be regarded as departments of the church, without any suggestion of inferiority

## APPENDIX

or superiority among them, and may make separate contributions to their own missionary enterprises.

SECTION 2. The relation of this church to the public school community center is in no sense official, but it is vital. It shall be the policy of the church to undertake no activity which can be conducted more efficiently by the community center. In order to prevent waste through duplication and to serve a larger number of people, the church will turn over to the school any activity it may have inaugurated as soon as the community association of citizens is ready to assume responsibility for it.

### ARTICLE VII. AMENDMENTS

This Constitution and these By-laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any meeting called for the purpose.

## AFTERWORD

A COMMITTEE is now at work on the formation of a National Association for the Promotion of Community Churches. Other members of the committee also have in preparation books on the subject. They are John Haynes Holmes, New York; Joseph Ernest McAfee, New York; and Harold Marshall, Boston.

Until the proposed Association is formed and prepared to render service to those desiring it, the author of this book will be glad to receive letters from any who are interested, and to refer such communications to the Association as soon as it is organized.



## LIST OF REFERENCES

Ames, Edward Scribner, *The New Orthodoxy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918.

Baker, Ray Stannard, *The Spiritual Unrest*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1909.

Bancroft, George, *History of the United States*; chapter, "The People called Quakers." New York: D. Appleton & Co.

Butler, Samuel, *Erewhon*; chapter, "The Musical Banks." New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1872-1917.

Carver, Thomas Nixon, *The Religion Worth Having*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912.

Churchill, Winston, *The Inside of the Cup*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913.

Coleman, George, *Democracy in the Making*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1915.

Crapsey, Algernon Sidney, *The Rise of the Working Class*; chapter, "Working Class Religion." New York: The Century Company, 1914.

Crooker, Joseph Henry, *The Church of Tomorrow*. Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1911.

Figgis, John Neville, *Churches in the Modern State*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1914.

Follett, M. P., *The New State*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1918.

Gladden, Washington, *The Church and Modern Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

Hunter, Robert, *Why We Fail as Christians*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919.

Jackson, Henry E., *A Community Center; What It Is and How to Organize It*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1918.

Jenkins, Burris A., *The Protestant*. Chicago: Christian Century Press, 1918.

Lansbury, George, *Your Part in Poverty*. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1916.

Maciver, R. M. *Community*. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Mazzini, Joseph, *Essays*; chapter, "Lamennais." London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1839.

Mazzini, Joseph, *Essays*; chapter, "From the Pope to the Council." London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1850.

Mazzini, Joseph, *The Duties of Man*; chapter, "From the Council to God." New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1870.

McAfee, Joseph Ernest, *Religion and the New American Democracy*. Privately printed, 1918.

MacDonald, George, *Thomas Wingfold, Curate*. Philadelphia: David McKay.

Quick, Herbert, *The Broken Lance*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1907.

Rauschenbusch, Walter, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, 1907. *Christianizing the Social Order*, 1912. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Roberts, Richard, *The Church in the Commonwealth*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co.

Royce, Josiah, *The Problem of Christianity*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913.

Rutherford, Mark, *Autobiography and Deliverance*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1899.

Shaw, Anna Howard, *The Story of a Pioneer*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1915.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

Sinclair, Upton, *The Profits of Religion*. Pasadena, Cal.: Published by the author, 1918.

Thompson, Robert Ellis, *The Divine Order of Human Society*. Philadelphia: John D. Wattles, 1891.

Ward, C. Osborne, *The Ancient Lowly*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., Vol. I., 1889, Vol. II., 1900.

Ward, Edward J., *The Social Center*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1915.

Ward, Julius H., *The Church in Modern Society*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1889.

Wilson, Woodrow, *The Minister and the Community*. New York: Association Press, 1912.

Wright, Harold Bell, *The Calling of Dan Matthews*. New York: A. L. Burt Company, 1909.

Zueblin, Charles, *The Religion of a Democrat*. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1908.



## **INDEX**



## INDEX

Abbott, Lyman, 282, 316.  
Abraham, popular short story of, 154.  
America, national church of, ix; spirit of, 351.  
Anger, a means of self-defense, 10.  
Aristotle, *Politics*, 330; what would amaze him most in life of to-day, 347.  
Aurelius, Marcus, quoted, 10.  
  
Bagehot, Walter, 250.  
Baker, Ray Stannard, 92, 282.  
Benson, Arthur C., quoted, 187.  
Bible, the, has no title, 51; an undiscovered book, 52-58; injury it suffers from sectarianism, 141, 284; Huxley on the study of, 283.  
Bradford, Amory H., 68.  
Bright, John, contrasted with Newman, 325; a typical democrat, 326.  
Browning, Robert, 181, 262.  
Bryce, James, xi, 196, 197.  
Burroughs, John, 170.  
  
Carlyle, Thomas, 213.  
Christian religion, ignorance of, 71.  
Christianity, the capture of, 186.  
Church, the awakening of, xiv; failure of, revealed by war, xvi; disturbing questions about, xxvii; a puzzling problem, 5; root cause of its trouble, 17, 38; its irreconcilable conflict, 21; its lack of intellectual freedom, 49; its lack of conviction, 74; a working platform, 80; its lack of financial freedom, 93, 204; reason for its yearly deficits, 99; refuses to do pioneer social work, 129; still in the woods, 171; a follower of public opinion, 181; does not know its goal, 183; three stages in its evolution, 191, 208; why it cannot reform itself, 204; three types of, 227; do we need any at all, 291; once a community center, 293; how to elevate its moral standard, 300.  
Churchill, Winston, his book, *The Inside of the Cup*, xxiv.  
Classes, danger of, 238.  
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 2, 191, 235.  
Community, the, search after a hub for its activities, 143.  
Community center, a, 235; characteristics of, 261; is it a real church, 273; do we need any other type of church, 280; the relation of a community church to, 287; how injured by sects, 288.  
Community church, a, 157; a necessity, 165; what it is, 175; limits gifts for its support, 177; pays taxes, 177; exhibits unity and liberty, 191; an American product, 200; not a federation of sects, 202; how to start one, 212; needs new type of

# INDEX

architecture, 216; its policy a prevention rather than a cure, 223; brief description of, 228; seven cardinal virtues of, 355; how to promote, 362; suggested certificate of incorporation for, 370; suggested constitution for, 372.

Community secretary, the, a new profession, 305.

Compromise, danger of, 218.

Confucius, xii.

Copenhagen, its liberty monument, 335.

Creeds, morally wrong, 73.

Cromwell, Oliver, 332.

Death, a help to progress, 241.

Democracy, religion of, 317; challenge of, 325; Whitman's definition of, 334; the three elements of, 335; discovery of, 336; more than a religion, 341; two essential needs of, 343; a layman's religion, 346; missionaries of, 347; dangerous to advocate, 348; representatives of, 358.

Denmark, Folk High School, xii, 277.

Dewey, John, 310.

Economics, and politics, 332.

Education, new conception of, 243; what it is, 342.

Ellis, Havelock, 341.

Epictetus, 215.

Ferguson, Charles, 158, 235, 268, 348.

Four Gospels, the, discovery of, 69.

Freedom, goal of history, 50; use of, 180; abuse of, 189; an achievement, not a dower, 327.

Fulton, Robert, steamboat, 237.

Gareth, xxxiii.

George, Henry, 340.

Gladstone, W. E., 349.

Goethe, xxviii.

Goldsmith, Oliver, 134.

Government, five historic forms of, 343.

Grayson, David, 310.

Holmes, John Haynes, 209.

Humor, American, distinctive quality of, 236.

Huxley, Thomas, on the use of the Bible, 283.

Independence, Declaration of, 329, 336, 344.

Jefferson, Thomas, 252, 333.

Jeroboam, why it is safe to talk about him, 98.

Jesus, why he could not reform the church of his day, 208; would he get a call from a church to-day, 186; his inaugural address, 253; his attitude to children, 273; founded no church, 275; the songs of his childhood, 336.

Lamb, Charles, 229, 254.

Lincoln, Abraham, quoted, 3; why he did not join the church, 127; what educational experts would have made of him, 247; on public opinion, 261; opposed by ministers, 299.

Livingstone, David, 136.

Lowell, James Russell, 342, 350, 352.

Luther, Martin, a panic-stricken progressive, 188; his service to education, 296.

# INDEX

Macaulay, Lord, 249.  
Madison, James, 249.  
Markham, Edwin, 10.  
Mark Twain, 298; his *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, 317.  
Matheson, George, 276, 296.  
Maurice, F. D., 190.  
McAfee, Joseph Ernest, letter of, quoted, 271.  
"Mental hospitality," 85, 241; church's lack of, 306; the school's lack of, 307.  
Mill, John Stuart, 48.  
Ministers, can they be honest, 3; their way of escape, 302.  
Money, why Jesus talked about it so much, 93; why no constructive poem has been written on, 123.  
Morse's electric telegraph, 237.  
Moses, why he took forty years to go a three weeks' journey, 230.  
National church, does America have a, 269.  
Nazareth, open forum held in, 253.  
New Chivalry Movement, the, 132.  
Oberlin, John Frederic, 23.  
Old-age, disease of, xxxii.  
Open-mindedness, xii, 221.  
Opposition, a test of merit, 46.  
Palmer, George Herbert, on teaching morals, 279.  
Pericles, 331.  
Pharisees, what they are, 18, 112.  
Phillips, Wendell, 49.  
Plato, 62.  
Poets, have more freedom than ministers, 60.  
Politics, and religion, 326; why the term has been cor- rupted, 329; how to redeem it, 331.  
Poor, the, advantages of, 215.  
Public school, discovery of, 239, 241; its golden age lies ahead, 240; its use as a polling-place, 244; as a Forum, 248; as a neighborhood club, 254; three illustrations of its use, 257; an instrument of democracy, 344.  
Quick, Herbert, his book, *The Broken Lance*, xxv; *The Brown Mouse*, 258.  
Rauschenbusch, Walter, 239, 294, 298, 333.  
Religion, a universal necessity, 277; Chinese word for, 279.  
*Robinson Crusoe*, why not better known, 242.  
Roosevelt, Theodore, 333.  
Royce, Josiah, 46, 345.  
Ruskin, John, 263, 277.  
Russell, Bertrand, 74.  
"Sacred" and "secular," false distinction between, 138; has no existence, 318; accounts for superstition, 322; stimulates cowardice, 323.  
Schoolhouse, the, this the age of, 264.  
Sects, the, abolition of, 147; harmful influence of, 148; trifling names, 149; reason for, 155; can any be recommended, 161; a waste of, 167.  
"Secular" and "sacred," false distinction between, 138.  
Seminaries, theological, 303.  
Shepherd Psalm, the, secret of its popularity, 82.  
Sill, Edward Rowland, 46.

## INDEX

Sin, the unpardonable, what it is, 86.

Socrates, 31, 160, 328.

Spiritual, meaning of, 31.

Stetson, Charlotte Perkins, poem by, quoted, 87.

Stevenson's locomotive, 237.

Suburbs, danger of living in, 129.

Sun-dial, a, Charles Lamb on, 229.

Sympathy, intelligent, 310.

Tact, meaning of, 33.

Taxation, why exemption of the churches from, is unjust, 178.

Ten Commandments, the, too disturbing for the church, 62; why neglected by the church, 83.

Thompson, Robert Ellis, quoted, 126.

Tolerance, something better than, 222.

Transportation, modern methods of, 237.

Trustees, Board of, why they should be abolished in the church, 113.

United States, the, unique character of, 197.

Whitman, Walt, 334.

Whittier, John Greenleaf, 182, 209; poem by, quoted, 292.

Wilson, Woodrow, 159, 163, 262.

Wordsworth, William, 160.

Youth, spirit of, xxxii.



**The Riverside Press**  
**CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS**  
**U . S . A**



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Fine schedule: 25 cents a day for books under \$1.00

50 cents a day for books over \$1.00

One dollar or a week for delinquent credit

NOV 12 1947

LD 21-100m-12,'46(A2012s16)4120

428675

5V600

10

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

